



## **An Open Letter to Dr. Greg Stanton, the President of Genocide Watch**

April 22, 2009

Dr. Greg Stanton, the President of Genocide Watch,  
P.O. Box 809,  
Washington, D.C. 20044  
USA.

### **Dear Dr. Stanton:**

As the new executive director of the Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia (SMNE), I would like to speak on behalf of our organization in expressing our deep appreciation for your organization strong commitment to stopping genocide and holding perpetrators accountable for their actions. The people of Ethiopia are among millions of others throughout the world who are greatly indebted to you for your hard work, your courageous stand and your unswerving dedication to truth, justice and human rights.

Most notably to us Ethiopians, we thank you for your recent letter to the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights where you formally requested the initiation of a human rights investigation into the serious situation in Ethiopia and into Somalia where a pattern of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other human rights crimes has been very well documented. In places like the Ogaden region of Ethiopia, it continues to be perpetrated with impunity under the leadership of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi.

Shortly after the genocide of the Anuak in December of 2003, I still remember your open response to my urgent call to you on behalf of those from my own ethnic group, the Anuak, who were targeted by the Ethiopian National Defense Forces and militia groups. These two groups worked hand in hand together in the massacre of over 400 Anuak in less than three days. As you well know, the extra-judicial killings, rape, destruction of property, disappearances, imprisonment and torture continued on through the end of 2005 before many of the same forces were moved to the Ogaden where similar atrocities have been perpetrated. No one still has been held accountable; something that you emphasized would eventually become the fate of those authorizing, empowering and committing such inhumane and outrageous violence against God-given human life.

The foundation for a future case against those involved, which implicated those in the highest levels of Ethiopian government, is well established thanks to your willingness to listen and to follow that up with two thorough investigations sponsored by your organization, Genocide Watch, and Survivors' Rights International: "Today is the Day for Killing Anuak" and "Operation Sunny Mountain." Because of those investigations and others, a formal legal case has already been submitted to the International Criminal Court in the Hague and to the African Union by two separate international legal firms in Washington D.C. who have been doing the legal work for the Anuak Justice Council since 2005 and who have been working with SMNE since the beginning of 2009.

Another international human rights law firm from Canada has also recently joined in partnership with the SMNE. All three firms will focus on different, but complementary areas of legal work and have indicated that they are more determined than ever to move ahead, especially in light of what has happened recently to President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan. Additionally significant, as an expert in genocide and in the application of international human rights law, you have defined these acts against the Anuak as genocide, something that demands appropriate actions; particularly because the ongoing perpetration of “legalized terrorism” by the government of Ethiopia against its own people still is ongoing and must be stopped.

The use of terroristic acts is not new to this Ethiopian government, but merely an extension of the brutal methods the Meles-controlled TPLF forces have utilized for years. Prior to their overthrow of the Derg government of Mengistu in 1991, they were declared a terrorist organization, partly based on their involvement in the kidnappings of French citizens. Even though their tactics remain the same, the Meles government is preoccupied with maintaining the appearance of “good governance and “respect for human rights” in order to qualify for “financial perks” from western donor countries, but now you have helped to expose their true nature.

In light of this, it is no surprise that Woindimu Asamnew, spokesman for the Ethiopian Embassy in Washington, reacted so strongly, calling your statements about the Anuak genocide “*totally unfounded fabricated lies.*” Yet, because of all the documentation available as a result of these investigations, they have nothing to offer in rebuttal except flat denials and empty lies. Such lies can be easily deconstructed through examining the abundant evidence that still remains in Gambella, which includes scores of remaining family members and other witnesses who are looking forward to the day when they will be able to recount the stories of the deaths of their loved ones in a court of law. In a tiny ethnic group like the Anuak, it is fairly easy to identify those who died and those responsible for their deaths, including the civilians who were involved. The only totally unfounded and fabricated lie here is that there is democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Ethiopia.

Thanks to your immediate involvement, the case of the Anuak may be one of the most thoroughly documented cases in Ethiopia, one that in and of itself, could bring Meles and others to court, but as you have pointed out, it is only one in a very long series of mass atrocities committed by this regime. I am hopeful that in the near future, we will be able to further our partnership with Genocide Watch, working together to gather more documentation on previous and ongoing crimes so as to combine all of it into one strong case.

Examples would include the killings of more than 300 Amhara civilians in a small village of Arba Gugu in December 1991 and in town of Bedeno in April 1992, in the Harar region shortly after the TPLF came into power, the killing of 92 Oromo civilians, peacefully protesting for Oromo autonomy in March 1992, the killing of six Addis Ababa University students in January 1993, during a student rally against the government, the killing of more than 200 protesters from the Mazenger and Shekicho ethnic groups in the town of Teppi as they protested the regional boundary lines on March 10, 2002, the killing of over 100 Sidamo people in Awassa on May 24, 2002, the killing of 47 civilians in Afar region in July 2003, the killing of 193 election protestors in the streets of Addis Ababa in 2005 (please see the attachment for all of the names, ages and details) and the mass atrocities being committed in the Ogaden.

Much evidence exists surrounding most all of these incidents implicating EPRDF officials as playing an instrumental role in these crimes. For instance, in the Awassa incident, credible witnesses report the presence of key ministers of the TPLF government, like Bereket Simon, Information Minister, Abadula Gemedo, who was the Minister of Defense and the chairman of the Oromo People’s Democratic Organization, (OPDO), Girma Birru, who was the Minister of Industry and the vice chairman of the OPDO and Mulugeta Alemsegid, a Politburo Member of the TPLF and Protocol Adviser to Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, in decision-making meetings prior to the killings.

They had traveled from Addis Ababa to Awassa to meet at the Regional (SNNPR) Head Office in Harassa on May 23, 2002 at 6:30 PM local time to decide on the fate of any Sidamo who might demonstrate the next day. During that meeting, sources who were present indicate that most all of the attendees voted for the resolution to forcibly suppress the demonstration, with the exception of the two local Sidamo officials, who opposed it. The people were then warned that if they came out to demonstrate, they would be shot.

Following the meeting, Abadula Gameda called in the Federal Defense Army and the Rapid Action Troops “fetno-derash” to implement the resolution. The next day, these armed forces carried out their orders and opened fire on peaceful demonstrators in the village of Logue near Hawassa town who were only carrying green leaves (symbolizing peace) and carrying Ethiopian flags (showing unity). Over 100 peaceful demonstrators were killed and another 100 were wounded, but still today, no one has been brought to justice.

More recent threats to the people continue as well, not only in the Ogaden, but also in places like Benishangul, Afar and Oromia where six young Oromo men were killed in July of 2008. In order to destroy the evidence, their bodies were left out for hyenas to devour, but the evidence emerged anyway.

Larger-scale abuses are also accelerating in the place called **Walkeit Tsegeda** in the north where Amhara live. It gives increasing evidence to the belief that there has been a long-standing subversive plan to confiscate their fertile indigenous land where they have lived for hundreds of years. It began when the TPLF took over Ethiopia in the early nineties. At the time, they divided the regions of Ethiopia by ethnicity and gave everyone the right to speak their own mother tongue.

Every ethnic region was also given the right to secede from Ethiopia if they so chose; however, rather than include this Amhara-dominated area with the rest of the Amhara region, the TPLF took these fertile lands and made them part of their own Tigrayan region, an area unfortunately known for its infertile land. Until more recently, these Amhara were allowed to continue to speak their own dialect; but now, these people report that their children are being forced to speak Tigrayan in the schools. If they refuse, they are being told that they should leave the region and go to the Amhara region where the Amharic language is spoken. The Meles government has already forcibly displaced some of the people.

Many Ethiopians believe that the stage is being set for the future secession of the Tigrayan region from Ethiopia and that the same tactics as above, will be used in the Afar region to eventually penetrate through the adjacent Eritrean region to gain access to the Red Sea. Unfortunately, resistance from the people could easily be met with further genocide and the crimes against humanity that are characteristic of this government. **This is an area to watch in order to prevent genocide and further human rights crimes from occurring.**

Yet, despite the ongoing problems, thanks to groups like Genocide Watch, Survivors Rights International, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Ethiopian Human Rights Council, World Organization Against Torture (OMCT), Doctors without Borders and others, the people of Sidamo, Amhara, Afar, the Ogaden, Oromia and Gambella, as well as others all over Ethiopia, have now voiced their renewed hope that this regime will finally be held accountable after years of getting away with systematically terrorizing, imprisoning, massacring and persecuting numerous innocent and vulnerable people all over Ethiopia.

New laws in western countries will also contribute to confronting these perpetrators with the harsh reality that it is those same western countries where they might want to run to—should this government collapse—that now have laws in place to prosecute violators for past gross human rights abuses or corruption.

Mr. Abay Tsehaye was someone who could tell about his own encounter with this possibility several years ago when I alerted you to his presence in Washington D.C. and you, through Genocide Watch, took action. The Center for Justice and Accountability also became involved, as one of their mandates is to make sure perpetrators of human rights crimes are prosecuted for their actions.

According to these new laws in the US, when such individuals enter this country, they can be held accountable for their crimes if there is sufficient evidence. Abay Tsehaye was one of those named in connection to the Anuak genocide and convincing evidence was uncovered in the investigation. We also have credible evidence against numerous others such as Colonel Tsegaye and Omot Obang Olom, the governor of Gambella who is also a genocide suspect. Based on preliminary information found in your investigations, the Canadian government denied him entrance into Canada in the summer of 2008.

Another key individual is Dr. Geberab Barnabas, who Meles removed from his position as Federal Representative to the Gambella region in 2004 and placed him in the Tigray region due to pressure from the international human rights community because of the evidence strongly linking him to deep involvement in the Anuak massacre. Meles may try to hide him from the public eye, but what he may not understand is that all the people who have been involved in the gross human rights abuses or in serious corruption will eventually be brought before the courts, one by one. It is just a matter of time. The law firms working with the SMNE have their information and new information will continue to be collected from all over Ethiopia where these kinds of serious crimes have been committed. We sincerely hope that many will be deterred from continuing to commit additional crimes because of this.

Unfortunately, people who have committed these kinds of crimes most often do not admit their guilt or show remorse. Instead, as you said in a recent radio interview with Addis Dimts, people who commit genocide are really “*serial killers who go on to kill again and again and again*”, not stopping until forced to do so. As a result, they leave a trail of evidence behind. This is exactly the evidence that will later convict them in a court of law. Cases in point are those who committed crimes during the Holocaust, Slobodan Milosevic, Charles Taylor and now Omar al-Bashir. Even as Meles gives Omar al-Bashir the royal treatment in Addis Ababa this past week in defiance of the ICC’s arrest warrant for al-Bashir, it simply looks like he is really just defending himself against the possibility of similar charges. The truth is, he is further setting his own trap by defending a man who is known to be responsible for the deaths of millions of Sudanese—an association he could do without.

Those within the Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia, including me, are more committed than ever to work with organizations like Genocide Watch, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, World Organization Against Torture (OMCT), Anti-Corruption Organization, the Center for Justice and Accountability and other justice-seeking groups as well as groups committed to stopping money laundering and corruption. As we are able, we will continue to reach out to these groups to engage them in partnership and to provide any information that is needed for them to act. Additionally, we in the SMNE will also be sending a backup letter to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, accompanied by a short video about the Anuak genocide, which could provide important visual evidence.

In conclusion, I want to personally thank you for the outstanding work you have done, not only for the Anuak, but also for humanity. I will never forget the pain and despair I felt after hearing the horrible news of the Gambella genocide and reading the email attachment listing all of the victims. Most of those on the list, I knew personally. They were my family members, classmates, work colleagues and people I had known since childhood. They were good people, worthy of respect, not deserving of such degradation, but of course, I have learned, this is exactly the kind of person who becomes a threat to this regime.

I remember my tears of overwhelming grief and the feeling that my world, as I knew it, had ended. I felt like I was lost in the wilderness of this world of civilization and guns. I started making call after call to find help. I had felt that because I was in a western country where people cared about human life, it would be different, but my calls for help were ignored. I felt like I was screaming alone and that no one cared about what had happened to these people until that afternoon in December of 2003 when I reached you. Out of the many calls I made to western governments and organizations, you were the only one that immediately responded with attentive listening.

Your response was like the light that lifted the darkness and spurred me on in this work. It is definitely one of the reasons I am here today, still seeking protection and justice for not only the Anuak, but also the Ethiopian people and others in the Horn of Africa.

The pain that started on that day, will not be relieved until justice prevails for these people because I do not want any others to have to go through the horror and devastation I felt if I can do something to change the outcome, with the help of God. This is why I want to maintain my focus on relieving the suffering of the people and helping to bring about a better Ethiopia where “humanity comes before ethnicity” and where we care about the justice and protection of all our members for there will be no justice in Ethiopia until justice comes to all.

People like you and organizations like yours are what gives not only me, but also many other Ethiopians, the strength and hope to continue to persevere in our struggle for a “New Ethiopia” where genuine freedom, justice, truth, security, civility and the upholding of their human rights, create an environment where people can live and flourish together.

Please find the attachment for the list of links where you can find additional information about the other massacred throughout Ethiopia. Thank you for your support and cooperation.

May God bless you and your noble work.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Obang Metho', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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