

Global Response Campaign Alert Ethiopia

Take Action Now



“[The] government brought the Anuak people here to die. They brought us no food, they gave away our land to the foreigners so we can’t even move back.”

— Anuak elder forcibly moved to a state village (from the Human Rights Watch report, *Waiting Here for Death.*)

The Ethiopian government leased the homelands of these Anuak women to an Indian company, Karuturi Global Ltd, and moved them to a village where there is no land for farming.

Photo courtesy of Anuak Justice Council

Ethiopia

Stop Land Grabbing and Restore Indigenous Peoples’ Lands

Ethiopia receives more foreign aid than any other African nation—upwards of \$3 billion a year. Western governments see Ethiopia as a strategic bulwark in the “global fight against terrorism” and point to its progress toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals, an international program to end poverty and hunger.

But Ethiopia’s policies are deliberately making some of its citizens poorer and hungrier. The government is forcing the Indigenous Peoples of the southwest off their ancestral lands and leasing these lands to foreign companies. Bulldozers are destroying the forests, farms, and grazing lands that have sustained Anuak, Mezenger, Nuer, Opo, and Komo peoples for centuries. While the foreign companies are planting food crops and agrofuels like oil palm, mainly for export, soldiers are forcing thousands of Indigenous people into state-created villages, simultaneously robbing them of their livelihoods and their cultural identity. Their protests are being met with intimidation, extra-judicial killings, rape, incarceration, and torture. Journalists and human rights advocates in Ethiopia who speak out against these abuses are silenced or exiled.

Ethiopia’s deliberate policies of forced relocation, discrimination, repression, and environmental devastation are enabled, at least indirectly, by foreign aid.

It’s time for donor nations—especially the United States and the United Kingdom—to use their influence to halt these abuses. Let’s urge them to do this now!

There's no school for these "villagized" Anuak children.

Photo by Felix Horne



Stop Land Grabbing

For over 400 years, Indigenous Anuak families have lived along the wide rivers of Ethiopia's Gambella region, cultivating maize and sorghum in the rich alluvial soil. On higher ground, they practice shifting cultivation, and in the forests they gather fruits, nuts, roots, and medicines. These diverse resources have spared them from hunger even in times of drought. But now Ethiopian soldiers are moving nearly all of Gambella's Indigenous people—45,000 households—off their lands and farms and into state-created villages where the people fear starvation.

Nearly half of Gambella's land is leased or available for lease to investors who are creating vast plantations of agrofuel and food crops, mostly for export. Bulldozers are even draining and filling in the wetlands of Gambella National Park and destroying its forests.

One Indian corporation, Karuturi Global, Ltd., has leased a colossal 400 square miles in Gambella and expects to triple that amount. Ethiopian leases are so cheap (Karuturi paid \$1.25/hectare for 99 years) that companies from China and Saudi Arabia and many more from India are jumping on the bandwagon. No wonder the phenomenon is known as "land grabbing."

Who can stop it or even slow it down long enough to assess the environmental costs and the social and economic impacts on the Indigenous populations? Not the elected president of Ethiopia, who is largely a figurehead. Last year, the president and the Environmental Protection Authority ordered cancellation of a lease to 12,000 acres of forest, where the Indigenous Mazenger people live by hunting, gathering, and beekeeping. An Indian company, Verdanta Harvests, is now destroying the Mazengers' sacred forest, one of Ethiopia's last, to plant tea and spices for export.

"For us, land is not only economical, it is historical, political, spiritual, and very emotional," a displaced Anuak farmer told Oakland Institute researchers, who published a study of land grabbing in Ethiopia. His only emotion now is despair. "What is the future for our kids?" he cried. "They will be slaves." Ethiopia promises the Anuak jobs and health and education services in their new villages, but neither the Oakland Institute nor Human Rights Watch nor foreign journalists have been able to find evidence of these.

Who can stop it? The best hope lies with the donor nations that hold the purse strings. They can ensure that no donor funds or other forms of assistance facilitate land-grabbing and villagization schemes that violate Indigenous Peoples' rights. We are the ones who must convince them to do it.

Anuak farmers near Akuna had to leave their maize harvest behind when they were forcibly relocated.

Photo by Felix Horne



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You Can Help!

The Anuak Justice Council asks world citizens to send polite letters to the governments of the United Kingdom and the United States. In your letters, please:

- Express concern that the Ethiopian government is violating the rights of Indigenous Peoples and causing them extreme suffering through its forced "villagization" program and agricultural land leases.
- Urge them to ensure that no donor funds and other forms of assistance facilitate land-leasing and villagization schemes that violate Indigenous Peoples' rights and cause them harm.
- Ask them to use their influence as donor nations to demand that Ethiopia enforce its own constitution and international laws that recognize Indigenous Peoples' rights to ancestral lands, consultation, and compensation. Ask them to publicly call on Ethiopia to revoke repressive laws that stifle civic participation, press freedom, and dissent.

Please send polite letters, faxes, or emails to:

Mr. Johnnie Carson, Assistant Secretary
US Department of State
Bureau of African Affairs, Room 6234
2201 C Street, NW
Washington DC, 20520, USA
Fax: +202 647 0810 Attn. Laura Hruby, Ethiopia Desk
Email: CarsonJ@state.gov

Rt. Hon. Andrew Mitchell, MP
Secretary of State for International Development
1 Palace Street
London SW1E 5HE
United Kingdom
Fax: +44 20 7023 0634
Email: andrew.mitchell.mp@parliament.uk

Tips:

Address your letters to:
Dear Ambassador Carson,
Dear Minister Mitchell,

Postage within the U.S. is 45 cents.
Postage from the U.S. to the U.K. is \$1.05.
A model letter is available at www.cs.org
Personal, mailed letters have the most impact!

For more information, please see:

www.cs.org
"Waiting Here for Death" – Human Rights Watch, 2012
"Understanding Land Investment Deals in Africa: Ethiopia Country Report" – Oakland Institute, 2011

Thank you for joining this campaign.
The Anuak people say, *Uuna pwoc dac ki met ec!*
("Thank you very much!")