

GENOCIDE WATCH
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Chief Government Collaborator in Anuak Massacre Nominated for Governor of
Gambella State

The Ethiopian government has nominated Omot Obang Olam to be the next governor of Gambella State in Southwestern Ethiopia. Olam is an Anuak who is currently chief of State Security. Olam allegedly provided a list of Anuak leaders and intellectuals to be targeted for the genocidal massacres of December 13, 2003. The Ethiopian government views Olam as a loyal “true Ethiopian” because he has helped to force Anuaks off of their resource and oil-rich land for exploitation by the federal government. Vice-Prime Minister Adusu Legesse has warned Anuaks against opposing the federal government’s choices for positions in the state government.

Omot Ojullu Abella, a respected leader in Gambella, has been detained and held without charge in the Gambella Regional Prison for the past year. Amnesty International has protested Abella’s continuing detention and torture. The government recently shortened the nominating period for governor to an unprecedented three weeks. Since he cannot register as a candidate from prison, Abella has been effectively eliminated as a candidate for state governor in upcoming elections.

Government defense forces, called the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), have killed as many as 2,500 ethnic Anuak in the Gambella region since December 2003. Many more, including most Anuak leaders, have been imprisoned without charge. Hundreds of Anuaks have been tortured and raped. The Ethiopian authorities have attempted to justify these actions as a campaign against a “terrorist” insurgency. In fact, most of the army’s victims have been civilians and many Anuaks are Christians dedicated to non-violence.

These massive human rights violations have gone unpunished. Due to international pressure, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi finally appointed an “Inquiry Commission,” composed of government loyalists and party members. The “Inquiry Commission” report minimizes the number killed in the massacres and the army’s role in the killings. The government has tried to blame the massacres on rivalry between the Anuak and Nuer ethnic groups, although in fact, nearly all of the killings were committed by government troops.

In 2004, Genocide Watch and Survivors’ Rights International (SRI) conducted two field missions to Gambella to investigate the massacres. Anuak survivors and witnesses were interviewed in Gambella, as well as in the refugee camp in Pochalla, Sudan, where thousands of Anuaks have fled for safety. Genocide Watch and SRI published their first report February 26, 2004, “Today is the Day of Killing Anuaks,” and their second report December 13, 2004, “Operation Sunny Mountain.” Both are available online at www.genocidewatch.org.

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