



## **Genocide Warning: Ethiopia**

### **22 January 2012**

In the remote western region of Gambella, tens of thousands of people have been forcibly relocated from their land. In 2010, the Ethiopian government initiated a villagisation program. The program intended to group scattered farming communities into small villages, with the aim of changing their lifestyles, and providing better access to food, education and health. However, the government's plans are far from reaching these goals; the Ethiopian government has forcibly relocated approximately 70,000 people from their land with the intention to lease the land for foreign and domestic investment. There have been numerous reports of human rights violations. Many of the new villages where people are being relocated have inadequate food and lack healthcare and educational facilities. The Ethiopian government's villagisation program has been extremely detrimental to the livelihoods of the people of Gambella. The government's failure to provide food assistance has caused endemic hunger and cases of starvation. In addition, those who have resisted relocating are repeatedly assaulted and arbitrarily arrested. Through this program, the Ethiopian government is planning on relocating 1.5 million people by 2013 from the following regions: Gambella, Afar, Somali, and Benishangul Ghumuz

"My father was beaten for refusing to go along with some other elders," one former villager told HRW. "He said, 'I was born here – my children were born here – I am too old to move so I will stay.' He was beaten by the army with sticks and the butt of a gun. He had to be taken to hospital. He died because of the beating – he just became weaker and weaker."

In light of the recent report issued by Human Rights Watch, Genocide Watch is deeply concerned with the rising number of human rights violations in Ethiopia; as a result Genocide Watch is classifying the situation as a Genocide Alert.

The early signs which indicate, the occurrence of genocide in the near future are the following:

- Forcibly relocating approximately 70,000 people from the western region of Gambella
- The use of force and coercion
- The deprivation of resources & the denial of rights
- The targeting & exclusion of indigenous groups
- The restriction on NGOs such as the Human Rights Council (HRCO )& the Ethiopian Women's Lawyer Association
- The absence of free media and lack of tolerance on dissents



## **Ethiopian Tribes Cry For Help**

### **6 March 2012**

The Lower Omo valley located in South-west Ethiopia is inhabited by several ethnic groups known as the Omo tribes. The Omo tribes are agro-pastoralist and nomadic. They are self-sufficient tribes that rely on land and water for survival. Many of the tribes are currently facing extinction.

The Ethiopian government's new appetite for large-scale agricultural development is causing catastrophic damage to the land and the people in the Lower Omo Valley. The construction of Africa's largest hydropower plant, the Gibe III dam and the vast areas being cleared for sugar and biofuel plantations are accompanied by alarming human rights violations. The land is being leased to Indian, Chinese, and Saudi multi-national agro-corporations at rock-bottom prices. None of the money for the leased land is being used to benefit the Omo tribes. They are simply being pushed off their traditional land.

The Ethiopian government is forcibly relocating tribes in a manner identical to the brutal way they drove out the Anuak population in Gambella province. Approximately 300,000 hectares of land in the Omo valley are currently being cleared in order to cultivate sugar cane and biofuel plantations. The large dam flooding the land, along with the plantations, threaten to destroy the very existence of the Omo tribes.

A tribal leader explained how his self-identity and worth are linked to the land. "We stand to lose everything. Our traditional hunting grounds, the land we use for grazing our cattle, our homes. Everything will be gone. We will be left with nothing. We need the outside world to help us."

According to testimonies collected by Survival International and the Oakland Institute, gross human rights violations are occurring in the Omo Valley. The Ethiopian Peoples Defense Forces are using a systematic policy of intimidation, rape, assault and detention against women, children, and the elderly, and are arresting and detaining men. There are also reports of male tribesmen who have been raped by the Ethiopian forces, a traumatic dehumanization from which many never recover. The lower Omo valley is surrounded by roadblocks that ensure that the eviction plans and other human rights abuses stay out of the spotlight. It is practically impossible for any news media to get permission to travel there.

Land grabbing without compensation has become official policy in Ethiopia. It is no wonder. President Meles Zenawi began his career as head of the Marxist-Leninist Tigreyan Peoples Party during the Mengistu years. Many Ethiopians fear that this new form of internal colonialism will not only destroy their land but their identity as well. The situation in the Omo Valley is one of many harbingers of a genocidal storm that is now descending on "the land of thirteen months of sunshine."

- Genocide Watch considers Ethiopia to have already reached Stage 7, genocidal massacres, against many of its peoples, including the Anuak, Ogadeni, Oromo, and Omo tribes.
- We recommend that the United States government immediately cease all military assistance to the Ethiopian Peoples Defense Forces. We also recommend strong diplomatic protests to the Meles Zenawi regime against massive violations of human rights in Ethiopia
- Ethiopia is currently fighting a proxy war with US support in Somalia. We strongly advise diverting all US aid for Ethiopia in that war to the African Union Forces in Somalia.