A Ferocious Attack Committed In Gambella Region
72nd Special Report

5 January 2004

Introduction

In ethnic conflicts that had occurred at different times in Gambella Region, many were killed and wounded. Public and private property was damaged. EHRCO had reported the casualties on human lives and property in its 55th Special Report issued on 6 September 2002. Failure on the part of both the Federal and Regional Governments to take urgent and lasting measures to bring an end to the ethnic conflicts and the repeated attacks on civilians by unidentified armed groups has resulted in the disastrous attacks recently mounted against members of the Anuak tribes.

As a result of the ethnic policy adopted by the EPRDF government, conflicts have been flaring up in different parts of the country. These conflicts have resulted in the death of thousands of civilians and considerable damage of property. In attacks launched against the Anuaks in the Gambella Region on 12 and 13 December 2003,many were killed and wounded and a considerable amount of property was damaged. Thousands have fled their homes to the jungles. Children and older people who could not flee the attacks were also killed and wounded.

All public offices and most private businesses were closed until 22 December. Schools have been closed until the time that this report is being prepared. The details of facts EHRCO gathered by visiting the area from 21-25 December 2003 are presented as follows:

The Cause of the Attacks

The indigenous people in Gambella Region are the Anuak, the Nuer, the Komo, the Medjenger and the Oppo.People that moved from the different parts of the country and who live in the region are referred to as "highlanders" or people from the center. Though all the indigenous ethnic groups are represented in the regional government structure, the top positions are held by the Anuak and the Nuer.The "highlanders" have long been complaining that repeated human rights violations and injustices were benig committed against them by some officials of the region that belong to the Agnuak ethnic group. They also tell that their repeated petitions to the Federal as well as the Regional officials have fallen on deaf ears. As a result tension has been created between the Anuaks on the one hand, and people from other ethnic groups living in the region.

The 'highlanders' complain that apart from the ethnic based discrimination that they have been subjected to, the periodic killings and looting launched against them by unidentified armed groups in the region have precipitated the situation into an all-out clash. The failure on the part of the Regional Government to apprehend and to bring to justice those armed groups has also contributed a lot to the worsening of the situation by the day. It was in such time of heightened hostility among the different ethnic groups in the region that the conflicts escalated and turned into a violent clash.

On 17 November 2003, in a place named Abebo, 40 kilometers from Gambella town, unidentified armed men killed in cold blood, five people who work for a construction company called Satcon. Their names appear in Table 1 below.

Table 1.Names and Other Details of Victims

No.	Name of deceased	Details
1.	Dessalegn Feyissa	A grader operator
2.	Belay Hassen	A dozer operator
3.	Mitiku Yimer	A superintendent
4.	Tewodros Aberra	
5.	Alemayehu Shanka	

Members of the defense force in the region had taken the bodies to Gambella town. The attackers however, have not been captured and brought to justice. Similarly, on 12 December 2003,seven workers of the Gambella branch office of the Immigration and Returnees Affairs Authority and a policeman escorting them were ambushed and killed while traveling on duty in a place called Finkiwo, 30 kilometers from Gambella town. The bodies were found mutilated by the attackers. According to information EHRCO received from the region's police office, the limbs and necks of the bodies were cut to parts. The attackers also cut the penis of the policeman and put it in his mouth. The region's police confirmed the names and other details of four of the victims. As to the remaining four, police said that no one could identify them, as they were day laborers not registered in the Authority's list of permanent employees.

Table 2 Names and Other Details of The Four Victims Who Were Identified.

No.	Name of the Deceased	Details
1.	Binyam Ali	Head of the Gambella branch office of the Immigration and Returnees Affairs Authority
2.	Kefyalew Waqjirra	A driver in the Authority
3.	Kasu Fofa	An engineer in the Authority
4.	Pvt.Solomon Tesfaye	A policeman

Members of the defense force latter arrived at the scene of the killings and took the mutilated bodies of the victims by putting them in a sack, to Gambella town. Rather than taking the bodies to the hospital, they took them to the angry crowd in the town of Gambella. Then, they showed the crowd mutilated bodies packed in a sack. The infuriated crowd headed directly to the office of the regional Council escorting the pick up car that carried the bodies. Once they reached there, they started throwing stones on the office building. Guards at the building tried to disband the crowd by firing into the air but they failed. The Chief Administrator of the Region escaped the attacks of the angry crowd but stones thrown at him shattered the front and side glasses of his car. Then, attributing the atrocious killings of the eight men to Anuak armed groups in the jungles the crowd moved to take retaliatory actions on civilian Anuaks who live in Gambella town. Armed with axes, hatchets, daggers, knives and other weapons, the crowd headed to the villages of the Anuaks. The Anuaks tried to flee the attacks by running to their homes and other directions. As all exits out of the town were blocked by soldiers, about 5000 Anuaks were forced to enter the premises of the Mekane Yesus Church in the town. The mob, in collaboration with members of the defense force, continued to attack those who could not get anywhere to hide. Many were killed and sustained severe and light injuries. Moreover, about 470 houses belonging to the Anuaks were burnt down. The Gambella town municipality told EHRCO that it buried 65 bodies in one grave in a place called Jejebe at the out skirts of Gambella town in the night of 12 December 2003.The Office also said that it could identify only 19 of the bodies. As to the remaining 46,identification was not possible as no documents were found with the bodies and they were beginning to swell up. According to information EHRCO received from officials and residents of Gambella town, more than 300 Anuaks were killed by the attacks. Of these, EHRCO could get names and other details of the 93.In addition to this, the names and other details of 42 Anuaks who sustained

severe and light injuries were also found and incorporated in this report. As many Auaks fled the town, it was not possible to see the actual magnitude of the attacks and the human and material casualty that followed. However, EHRCO could be able to take pictures of those who sustained heavy and light injuries and who are still in Gambella town. EHRCO had also learnt that the region's police took 50 Anuaks, who sustained heavy injuries by gunshots from members of the defense forces, to the nearby town of Metu for further treatment.

Tables 3 and 4 show the names and other details of the persons killed and wounded by the attacks according to information gathered by EHRCO.

Table 3. Members of the Anuak tribe killed by the Attacks

No.	Full name	Age	Occupation	Details
1	Gnang Achwign	17	Student	Hit by a bullet
2	Tirru Jergnang			" "
3	Lam Agua		Student	" "
4	Oujeng Akuer		Student	" "
5	Ouwaro Ouliyek	19	"	" "
6	Kuy Aquay	21	"	" "
7	Corporal Oujulu Ouman	38	Police officer	" "
8	Mol Oujulu	38	Dozer operator	Hit by a hatchet and a bullet
9	Oumed Oungom			Hit by a bullet
10	Oujulu Ouchale	23	Farmer	Hit by a hatchet and a bullet
11	Ouchale Oujuato			Hit by a bullet
12	Saraf Oubova			" "
13	Amulu Oudi			" "
14	Cham Gora			" "
15	Ochugi Chegn Oujed	25	Student	Hit by a hatchet and a bullet
16	Chedi Oukdi	20	Driver	Hit by a bullet
17	Gogo Chiby	38	Pensioner	" "
18	Oumed Joka	43	Civil Servant	" "
19	Chor Oubeng	43	A policeman	Hit by a hatchet and a bullet
20	Oulay Oujulu			" "
21	Oukugn Gngum	48	Civil Servant	" "
22	Paulos Akliku	36	Civil Servant	" "
23	Kassa Ouged			Slain
24	Oucheng Ouboya			Hit by a hatchet and a bullet
25	Oubeng Okello	34	A policeman	" "
26	Oukuer Oulato	54	A Priest	Hit by a bomb and a hatchet
27	Ouwar Oukdi	30	Civil Servant	Hit by a bullet
28	Oujulu Oukumu	30	Policeman	" "
29	Cham Oukach	18	Student	" "
30	Peter Deng	68	Civil Servant	" "
31	Didumu Oumed	55	Civil Servant	" "
32	Ouged		Student	" "
33	Kuwot		Student	" "
34	Ched Yoseph	18	Student	Hit by a hatchet and a bullet
35	Oumed Ouchan			Hit by a bullet
36	Boka Keru	45	Civil Servant	Hit by a hatchet and a bullet
37	Oujulu Boka		Student	" "
38	Ougn Oujulu			Hit by a bullet
39	Ouryami Oujulu	46	Civil Servant	Hit by a hatchet and a bullet
40	Ouneto Ouryami		Student	" "
41	John Ouchala			Hit by a bullet
42	John Oubeng			" "
43	Ouchan			" "

44	Oukech Oujulu			" "
45	Adembel Ougula	65	Civil Servant	Hit by a hatchet and a bullet
46	Oujulu Gnguwok	19	Student	" "
47	Oumed Abaro	18	Student	" "
48	Ougnohom Oumed			" "
49	Oupiyew Apek	19	Student	Hit by a bullet
50	Bang Outuli	65	Pensioner	Hit by a bullet and a hatchet
51	Ouduwela Ouchan	41		" " " "
52	Cham Oukuway	21	Student	Hit by a bullet
53	Cham Gora	17	Student	" " "
54	Gora Ouman			" " "
55	Outin Gnglo	48	Policeman	Hit by a bullet and a hatchet
56	Ougnahom Oupiyum			Hit by a bullet
57	Liut.Okoli Jey	48	Civil Servant	Hit by a bullet and a hatchet
58	Oujulu Ouchale			Hit by a bullet
59	Okello Ouchudo	14	Student	Hit by a hatchet and an axe
60	Abele Ouchale		Student	Hit by a hatchet and a stone
61	Oujulu			Hit by a bullet
62	Oujulu Alid			" " "
63	Chibiy Ouchale			Hit by a bullet and a hatchet
64	Ouchale Olok		Student	Hit by a bullet
65	Bang Agua			" " "
66	Opol Akuri	18	Student	" " "
67	Buba Ouf	52	Farmer	" " "
68	Oujulu Ouman	19	Student	" " "
69	Liut.Oujha Chibiy	38	Police officer	" " "
70	Oumed Oujulu Abele	15	Student	" " "
71	Oukuwom Oujulu	18	Student	" " "
72	Oudella Wello	22	Student	" " "
73	Oujulu Oulami		Civil Servant	" " "
74	Oumed Oujulu			Hit by a bullet and a hatchet
75	Outong Oujulu	38	Policeman	" " " " "
76	Oumed Tedi	16	Student	" " " " "
77	Abuwole Ouchale	21	Student	" " " " "
78	Ouchiyew Oujulu	18	Student	" " " " "
79	Ouchiyew Ajak	18	Student	" " " " "
80	Oujulu Cham	17	Student	" " " " "
81	Achap	18	Student	" " " " "
82	Ouchala Oujuato	29	Civil Servant	" " " " "
83	Tuwol Atow	30	Civil Servant	" " " " "
84	Jen Agew	32	Civil Servant	Hit by a bullet and a bomb
85	Oumed Oujulu Oubang	20	Student	Hit by a bullet and a hatchet
86	Oujulu Gnawak	20	Student	Hit by a bullet and a bomb
87	Ougud Oubeng Jen	32	Civil Servant	" " " " "
88	Chamo Okowora	19	Student	Hit by stick and stone
89	Oungomo Oupiyew	31	Civil Servant	Hit by a bullet and a bomb
90	Oukech Oujulu	37	Farmer	Hit by stick and a stone
91	Abela Oujulu	36	Farmer	" " " " "
92	Lala Okello	36	Pensioner	" " " " "
93	Okello Awal	20	Student	" " " " "

The following is a summary table 3.

- 35 students
- 4 farmers
- 3 pensioners
- 17 civil servants
- 7 policemen
- 1 driver

- 1 priest and
- 24 other people

Table 4. Names and other Details of Members of the Anuak tribe Who Sustained Injuries By the Attacks

No	Full Name	Age	Sex	Details
1	Abrahm Abang		M	Sustained injuries on the skull, right hand and feet by beating
2	Oupuwara Okegn		M	Hit on the head by a club
3	Opar Cham	50	F	Hit on the head by stone
4	Oudulu Wefeyet	55	F	Hit on both hands by stone
5	Okello Cham	32	M	Injured on the head, both hands, and right ear.
6	Ourned Quach	20	M	Stabbed on the head by a dagger
7	Chan Abaya	24	M	Injured on the head by a hatchet
8	Oriyami Okay	26	M	His front teeth are broken
9	Okek Aman	20	M	Injured on the left foot and head by beating
10	Gnegneo Otiya	20	M	Stabbed on the head and right hand
11	Daniel Ourned	27	M	Injured on the head and right hand, has his four teeth broken as a result of beatings by iron rod, a club and a gun stock
12	Ourned Owar	15	M	Hit on the head by a gun stock
13	Ouwar Gurnet	26	M	Hit on the head by a gun stock
14	Imed Angola	18	M	Hit on the head by a hatchet
15	Danie Ouchala	28		Hit by a hatchet on the head, left ear and right hand
16	Oubang Alamp		M	Hit on the head by beating. Sent to Metu Hospital as the injury is heavy
17	Ataka Obach	20	M	Sustained light injury
18	Cham Akawer	50	M	Sustained light injury by fire while his house burnt down
19	Oujulu Kaka	27	M	Sustained light injury
20	Okello Chan	40	M	" " "
21	Ochala Oujulu	25	M	" " "
22	Omed Ourned	21	M	" " "
23	Omed Ochan	14	M	" " "
24	Apaya Ogak	19	M	" " "
25	Ajula Towol	23	F	" " "
26	Ojul Nijigaw	30	M	" " "
27	Ourned Akana	25	M	" " "
28	Awina Abuna	32	F	" " "
29	Ajira Owar	28	M	" " "
30	Dang Ochala	28	M	" " "
31	Bella Omed	50	M	" " "
32	Mobeno Odur	14	M	" " "
33	Ougulu Osulu	16	M	" " "
34	Osulu Wit	24	M	" " "
35	Okota Omar	20	M	" " "
36	Kassa Powell	25	M	" " "
37	John Ochala	25	M	" " "
38	Owar Med	27	M	" " "
39	Ochado Cham	32	M	" " "
40	Obang Opeti	89	F	" " "
41	Omed Gonedi	30	M	" " "
42	Oram Okaay	30	M	" " "

Conclusion

As a result of the ethnic policy of the government, it is becoming a common occurrence to see Ethiopians who lived in peace and harmony, killing each other categorizing themselves along ethnic lines. The ethnic and religious conflicts that have been flaring up in the different parts of the country are evidence of the fact that ethnic hostilities are getting more serious by the day. Rather than enabling citizens understand and exercise their rights as human beings, the ethnic based policy that the government is promoting is poisoning people's mentality by a negative tribal thinking. And this has created a situation that is getting dangerous as to threaten the very existence of the nation.

In a situation where millions of Ethiopians are being hit by famine, thousands are suffering having lost their security to work and live, many are rendered homeless due to natural and man made calamities; in general in a situation where poverty in the country has reached its acute stage, ethnic clashes that break out in the different parts of the country, could get out of hand and result in a more serious loss than what has already happened. Therefore EHRCO appeals to the Ethiopian government:

- To rectify its destructive ethnic policy which plays a significant part in causing such problems and to facilitate ways that promote good governance and make the public beneficiaries.
- To take appropriate legal measures on those officials who agitate the public to stand against each other and create enmity among the different ethnic groups. Blaming external forces and trying to cover up the real cause of the problem would do no good.
- To bring to justice those members of the defense and police forces who killed and attacked civilians.
- To rehabilitate the displaced members of the Anuak tribe by helping them rebuild their damaged homes and by supplying replacements to the property they had lost.
- To capture and bring to justice the armed groups who murdered the workers of Satcon Construction and those of the Immigration and Returnees Affairs Authority.

EHRCO also calls on those who stand for peace and the rule of law to exert pressure on the Ethiopian government, to appreciate the real seriousness of the problems in Gambella and other parts of the country and work hard to seek just and legal solutions by writing to government bodies and officials listed below.

- Council of People's Representatives
  P.O.Box 80001, Fax (251-1) 550900 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- Council of Federation
  P.O.Box 80001,Fax (251-1) 550722 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- H.E. Ato Girma Wolde Giorgis, President, FDRE
  P.O.Box 1031, Fax (251-1) 552020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- H.E.Ato Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister, FDRE
  P.O.Box 1031, Fax (251-1) 552020 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- H.E.Ato Harka Haroye, Minister of Justice, FDRE
  P.O.Box 1370 Fax (251-1) 520874 Addis Ababa
- Gambella National Regional State Council
  P.O.Box 25 Fax (251-1) 510277 Gambella, Ethiopia
- H.E.Ato Abay Tsehaye Minister of Federal Affairs, FDRE
  P.O.Box 5608, Fax (251-1) 511200 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia