

Building an Anti-Genocide Regime

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When the Genocide Convention was passed by the United Nations in 1948, the world said, "Never again."

But the history of the twentieth century instead proved that "never again" became "again and again." The promise the United Nations made was broken, as again and again, genocides and other forms of mass murder killed at least 170 million people, more than all the international wars of the twentieth century combined (Rummel, 1994).[2] Genocide, the devil on horseback, still rides unchecked, armed not with a scythe but with a Kalashnikov.

Why? Why are there still genocides? Why are there genocidal massacres being perpetrated in 2006 against the Fur, Massaleit, and Zaghawa in Darfur; and the the Banyamulenge, Hutus, Hema, and Lendu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo? Why does ethnic and religious hatred still divide Côte d'Ivoire and Iraq and threaten to erupt again in genocidal violence?

There are two primary reasons why genocide is still committed in the world:

1. The world has not developed the international institutions needed to predict and prevent it; and
2. The world's leaders do not have the political will to stop it.

In order to prevent genocide, we must first understand it. We must study and compare genocides and develop working theories about the genocidal process. There are many centers for the study of genocide that are doing that vital work in universities and research institutes in Europe, North America, Australia and Israel. But studying genocide is not enough. Our next task should be to create the international institutions and political will to prevent it. Three institutions, in particular, are needed: (1) politically effective centers for genocide prevention; (2) rapid response forces for non-violent prevention and armed military response; and (3) effective international courts for punishment. To create political will, an international movement to end genocide must be built, requiring a massive educational, media and political campaign.

Creation of a Genocide Prevention Focal Point at the UN

The U.N. Security Council and key governments need strong, independent early warning systems to predict where and when ethnic conflict and genocide are going to occur, and to present options for prevention and intervention to policy makers. When The International Campaign to End Genocide (ICEG), a coalition of human rights organizations, attempted to contact officials at the UN about the genocidal massacres in East Timor in 1999, we discovered that no one had responsibility for receiving information or coordinating action about genocide. Therefore, in 2002, the ICEG recommended the creation of a Genocide Prevention "Focal Point" at the United Nations in New York, with a small permanent staff at the highest level that would receive information about risks of genocide and coordinate UN responses. UN officials in the Secretary General's Office of Policy Planning at first warned about negative reactions by some member states to previous proposals for UN preventive capacity. But as the idea was discussed and refined, it gathered support from high ranking UN officials like Danilo Turk and Edward Mortimer, who recommended it to Secretary General Kofi Annan.

The result was a proposal made at the Stockholm Forum on the Prevention of Genocide in 2004 by Gregory Stanton of Genocide Watch (Stanton, 2004a), which recommended appointment of a Special Adviser to the Secretary General on the Prevention of Genocide and creation of an independent Genocide

Prevention Center to support the Special Adviser's work. The Secretary General announced his support for the proposal at the Stockholm Forum, and in July 2004, he created the new post and named Juan Mendez as his first Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide.

Establishment of a Genocide Prevention Center

Realizing that the United Nations has limited resources, the ICEG also recommended to the governments and NGO's attending the Stockholm Forum that an independent Genocide Prevention Center be established to support the work of the Special Adviser. The Center would be located in New York and staffed with full-time early warning, political and operational planning specialists who have direct access to an international network of government officials, country experts, human rights nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the Special Adviser's office. (Stanton, 2004b)

The Brahimi Report of the Panel on U.N. Peace Operations (U.N. Doc. A/55/305 – S/2000/809: 2000) suggested such an office (the Information and Strategic Analysis Secretariat) at the U.N., but its recommendations were blocked by states (mostly from the G-77 developing nations plus India and China) that considered such a function (i.e., "intelligence-gathering" into "domestic" affairs) beyond the U.N.'s mandate. That is precisely why a Genocide Prevention Center must be independent of the U.N., but on the U.N.'s periphery, and considered by the Special Adviser to be a trusted source of reliable information. If the Center is not independent, it will be unable to issue opinions that displease member states, particularly states at risk or that are committing genocide. Yet it must have the confidence of the Special Adviser and develop a close informal relationship with him. Several human rights groups, notably Human Rights Watch and the International Crisis Group (an ICEG member), currently have such relationships with the Secretary General. The Genocide Prevention Center would become a clearing house and validator for reports from human rights groups and open sources around the world. It would operationalize those reports into options and plans for preventive action, and the Special Adviser and the Secretary General would use them to formulate recommendations to the U.N. Security Council.

One problem such a Center would face immediately is the closed nature of both government and U.N. information systems. Reports from UN field officials and government intelligence agencies are classified "confidential" or secret. Access to the country desk officers and top officials of the U.N. system would thus probably be indirect, through the Special Adviser. Access to government intelligence reports remains unlikely. However, the open secret of the new information age is that policy-makers would get better information if they ran a daily algorithm of world newsmedia for early warning signs, and regularly read leading newspapers, magazines, and human rights groups' reports, than if they counted on their embassies' classified cables. Several such open source, unclassified reporting services (IRIN, Reliefweb) provide daily collections of articles to the U.N. and others interested in reading them. However, none currently focus on potential genocide.

Even before a Genocide Prevention Center is established, coalitions of NGOs and genocide studies programs should establish independent early warning networks that can provide daily reports and regular policy options papers to the U.N.'s Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, to the Security Council and to individual governments. A few networks currently exist (see Harff, "The Development and Implementation of Genocide Early Warning Systems," in this volume) but they do not yet produce coordinated analyses. Even after a Genocide Prevention Center is established, NGOs should continue to provide reports independently to the Special Adviser, UN agencies, and member governments. The Center is not intended to be a unique source.

Briefings could be given to the Security Council by the Special Adviser. The first attempt by the Special Adviser to give such a briefing on Darfur was blocked by objections from the U.S., China, Russia and

Algeria (Reuters, 10 Oct. 2005.) But the Secretary General, himself, could exercise his prerogative under Article 99 of the U.N. Charter to “bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security.”

Early Warning Models

Early warning models matter. They must be comprehensible to policy makers, and provide specific guidance. The U.N. Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency have each had contracts with social scientists who use multi-variate, statistical models to predict the likelihood of genocide and other forms of violence. The models assign country scores to a large number of abstract risk factors (“level of democracy, trade openness, history of armed conflict, ethnic diversity”) and then assess the risk of genocide from their sum (Harff, 2003; Krain, 1997). The models are useful to the extent that they demonstrate the benefit of promotion of democracy and other general policies. But statistical models do not describe the intentional process by which political leaders push a society toward genocide. They therefore are not sufficient to formulate specific counter-measures at each stage of the genocidal process.

To provide immediate early warning signs, Harff (1998) has identified accelerators and triggers that may lead to genocide. They include refugee and internally displaced persons flows, compulsory visible identification of targeted groups, arming of ethnic militias, hate speech, killing of opposition leaders, and massacres. However, Harff’s accelerators are not ordered within the predictable process of genocide, the stages that all genocides follow, and therefore fail to predict how close a genocide may be. So that policy-makers can recognize early warning signs and plan specific counter-measures at each stage to stop the process, Stanton has proposed a structural theory of the genocidal process, “The Eight Stages of Genocide.” (Stanton 1998) Genocide’s eight stages are:

1. **Classification:** Underlying most social scientists' theories of genocide is an image of "ethno-centric man." Because all people grow up and live in particular cultures, speaking particular languages, they identify some people as "us" and others as "them." This fundamental first stage in the process does not necessarily lead to genocide. Genocide only becomes possible with another common human tendency -- considering only "our group" as human, and "de-humanizing" certain others. Thus, we not only develop cultural centers, we also create cultural boundaries that shut other groups out -- and the latter may become the boundaries where solidarity ends and hatred begins. "Us versus them" can be converted by political elites desiring to gain or retain power into ideologies of purity, exclusion, and destruction. (Valentino, 2004) Regimes bent on genocide take great pains to classify their populations. The main preventive measure at this early stage is to develop universalistic institutions that transcend ethnic or racial divisions, that actively promote tolerance and understanding, and that promote classifications that transcend the divisions.

2. **Symbolization:** Names or other symbols are assigned to the classifications. People are named "Jews" or "Gypsies", or distinguished by colors or dress. When combined with hatred, symbols may be forced upon unwilling members of pariah groups: e.g. yellow stars for Jews. To combat symbolization, hate symbols can be legally forbidden (swastikas) as can hate speech. If widely supported, denial of symbolization can be powerful, as it was in Bulgaria, when many Jews refused to wear the yellow star and were not turned in by their Christian neighbors, depriving the yellow star of its significance as a Nazi symbol for Jews.

3. **Dehumanization:** One group denies the humanity of the other group. Members of it are equated with animals, vermin, insects or diseases. Dehumanization overcomes the normal human revulsion against murder.

At this stage, hate propaganda in print and on hate radios is used to vilify the victim group. In combating dehumanization, incitement to commit genocide should not be confused with protected speech. Genocidal societies lack constitutional protection for countervailing speech, and should be treated differently than democracies. Hate radio stations should be shut down, and hate propaganda banned.

4. **Organization:** Genocide is always organized, usually by the state, though sometimes informally (Hindu mobs led by local RSS militants) or by terrorist groups. Special army units or militias are often trained and armed. Plans are made for genocidal killings. To combat this stage, membership in such militias should be outlawed. Their leaders should be arrested and denied visas for foreign travel. The U.N. should impose arms embargoes on governments and citizens of countries involved in genocidal massacres, and international commissions should investigate crimes against humanity.

5. **Polarization:** Extremists drive the groups apart. Hate groups broadcast polarizing propaganda. Laws may forbid intermarriage or social interaction. Extremist terrorism targets moderates, intimidating and silencing the center.

Prevention may mean security protection for moderate leaders or assistance to human rights groups. Assets of extremists may be seized, and visas for international travel denied to them. Coups d'état by extremists should be opposed by international sanctions.

6. **Preparation:** Victims are identified and separated out because of their ethnic or religious identity. Death lists are drawn up. Members of victim groups are forced to wear identifying symbols. They are often segregated into ghettos, forced into concentration camps, or confined to a famine-struck region and starved. At this stage, a Genocide Emergency should be declared. If the political will of the the U.N. Security Council or NATO can be mobilized, armed international intervention should be prepared, or heavy assistance given to the victim group to prepare for its self-defense. Otherwise, at least humanitarian assistance should be organized by the U.N. and private relief groups for the inevitable tide of refugees.

7. **Extermination:** Extermination quickly becomes the mass killing legally called "genocide." It is "extermination" to the killers because they do not believe their victims to be fully human. When it is sponsored by the state, the armed forces often work with militias to do the killing. Sometimes the genocide results in revenge killings by groups against each other, creating the downward whirlpool-like cycle of bilateral genocide, as in Burundi.

At this stage, only rapid and overwhelming armed intervention can stop genocide. Real safe areas or refugee escape corridors should be established with heavily armed international protection. (False "safe areas" are worse than none, because they only concentrate the victims.) A multilateral force authorized by the U.N., led by NATO or a regional military power, should intervene. Militarily powerful nations should provide the airlift, equipment, and financial means necessary for the intervention.

8. **Denial:** is the eighth stage that always follows a genocide. It is among the surest indicators of further genocidal massacres. The perpetrators of genocide dig up the mass graves, burn the bodies, try to cover up the evidence and intimidate the witnesses. They deny that they committed any crimes, and often blame what happened on the victims. They block investigations of the crimes, and continue to govern until driven from power by force, when they flee into exile. There they remain with impunity unless they are captured and a tribunal is established to try them. The best response to denial is punishment by an international tribunal or national courts. There the evidence can be heard, and the perpetrators punished. (Stanton, 2005.)

Rapid Response Forces

Early warning is not enough. What if the U.N. Security Council passed a resolution to implement a peace agreement, and sent in peace-keepers, but then genocide began? That is what happened in Rwanda. There were plenty of early warnings. The U.N. Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) commander, General Roméo Dallaire learned of the plans for the genocide three months before it began, had conclusive evidence of massive shipments of half a million machetes to arm the killers, and knew of the training camps for the *Interahamwe* genocidists. Yet, when he cabled the U.N. Department of Peacekeeping Operations requesting authorization to confiscate the machete caches, Undersecretary for Peacekeeping Operations Kofi Annan's deputy, Iqbal Riza, refused, claiming the action would exceed UNAMIR's mandate. Then, when the genocide actually began in April 1994, Dallaire desperately asked for a mandate and reinforcements to protect the thousands of Tutsis who had taken refuge in churches and stadiums. Led by the U.S., the Security Council instead voted to pull out all 2500 UNAMIR troops. General Dallaire has since said that even those troops could have saved hundreds of thousands of lives, had they remained (Stanton, 2004c).

Among the problems with U.N. peacekeeping forces is that they are composed of national troop contingents voluntarily contributed by risk-averse national governments, and may even take their orders from those governments rather than their U.N. commanders. Such forces take months to organize and are seldom composed of the world's best-trained and equipped soldiers.[3]

One regional military alliance lacks these drawbacks -- NATO. It has a coordinated command structure, extremely well-trained troops, and major resources. It proved to be quite effective once it was mobilized in Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s. But it has only begun to contribute to peace-keeping operations outside of Europe. The Standing High Readiness Brigade organized by Denmark, Austria, Canada, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland and Sweden in 1996 (since expanded to include Finland, Italy, Ireland, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, and Spain) was organized to provide a rapid response force of 5,000 heavy infantry and support personnel to the U.N. Security Council on thirty days' notice. It has thus far assisted Chapter VI (peacekeeping with the consent of the host country) monitoring missions in Ethiopia/Eritrea, Liberia, and Sudan. The European Union (EU) is organizing thirteen 1,500 person battlegroups ready to respond within ten days to decisions by the EU. However, the EU is likely to be hamstrung by the requirement for unanimity in its foreign policy decision making.

The United Nations eventually needs a standing, volunteer, professional rapid response force that does not depend on member governments' contributions of brigades from their own armies. A standing U.N. force would need the support of at least some of the major military powers, must be large enough to effectively intervene in situations like Rwanda, and should be composed of volunteers from around the world, the best of the best, who train together specifically for U.N. peace-keeping. Its capabilities and training would need to include many non-military functions, including policing, administration of justice, and conflict transformation. Although the U.S. and other Permanent 5 members of the Security Council do not currently support creation of such a standing U.N. force, it is an idea whose time will come.

Non-violent Intervention

We must build institutions to intervene non-violently before genocide begins. Every church, synagogue, mosque, and temple should teach peace-making, and inter-religious leaders' councils should be formed wherever there is religious division. In ethnically divided societies, radio and television and educational systems should be used to advocate tolerance and to humanize the other groups in the society, to show that they are like "us."

The 2005 report of the *U.N. High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change* (U.N. Doc. A/59/565 (2005)) recommended creation of a U.N. Peacebuilding Commission to be tasked with prevention of

conflict and state failure. The problem with the recommendation is that most genocide does not arise out of state failure or conflict. It is the result of unchecked state power.

The Carnegie Commission Report on Preventing Deadly Conflict (1997) is the best known example of the common assumption that conflict prevention will also prevent genocide. Conflict prevention is often a laudable goal, and sometimes it will contribute to genocide prevention. But it often will not. Jews had no conflict with Germans, nor did Armenians with Turks. In Rwanda, Kuperman (2001) argues that the Arusha Accords actually increased the likelihood of genocide when the Hutu Power elite realized they would lose their grip on power if the Accords were implemented. Faced with the negotiated reduction in their power, they instead decided to kill every Tutsi in Rwanda.

Diplomats believe in conflict prevention, so it is the default position of most foreign ministries. But in cases of genocide, forceful intervention to overthrow a dictator or stop mass killing may be much more effective than a peace agreement. Negotiations with genocidists may result in appeasement that encourages their will to power, as it did with Hitler, Stalin, and Habyarimana -- and, currently, with al-Bashir in Sudan.

The International Criminal Court

The world needs and finally has an International Criminal Court (ICC). Impunity for genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity must end. The ICC must be backed by the will of nations to arrest those it indicts. The ICC may not deter every genocidist, but it will put on warning every future tyrant who believes he or she can get away with mass murder. Despite the opposition of the U.S. government, which is still advocating impunity for U.S. officials (a position that would have immunized every tyrant of the last century), the ICC is now a reality and will soon be able to try perpetrators of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. The ICC Prosecutor has undertaken investigations in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, and Côte d'Ivoire. Through referral by the U.N. Security Council, he is now also investigating the crimes against humanity in Darfur, Sudan.

Building a Mass Movement Against Genocide to Create Political Will

These institutional changes will not be enough to end genocide in the twenty-first century. Eventually we must return to the problem of political will. It was not for want of U.N. peace-keepers in Rwanda that 800,000 people were murdered. They perished because of the complete lack of political will by the world's leaders to save them. Indeed, it was their political will to actually withdraw the U.N. peace-keepers and leave them to their murderers. Neither the U.S. nor any other member of the U.N. Security Council had the political will to risk one of their citizens to rescue 800,000 Tutsis from genocide.

There is something profoundly wrong about that. The wrong stems from the problem of ethno-centrism. We drew a national boundary, a circle, that shut Rwandans out of our common humanity. In October 2000, the second debate of the candidates for President of the United States demonstrated that neither candidate had learned the lessons of Rwanda. Then Governor George W. Bush said the U.S. was right not to send in U.S. troops because Rwanda is not in the sphere of America's national interests. Then U.S. Vice President Al Gore tried to excuse the Clinton administration's policy failure by saying the U.S. had no allies to go in with, as it did in Bosnia; ignoring the fact that 2500 U.N. peace-keepers were already on the ground in Rwanda. Evidently, he dismissed the use of the U.N. as a multi-lateral peace-keeper.

How can the political will of the world's leaders be mobilized to prevent and stop genocide? We must create a world-wide movement to end genocide, like the movement to abolish slavery in the nineteenth century. National leaders must learn that if they do not stop genocides, they will be voted out of office.

The International Campaign to End Genocide was organized at the Hague Appeal for Peace in May 1999 to mobilize the international political will to halt genocide once and for all. The ICEG envisions a world-wide network of organizations working together and separately toward that common goal.

The first job in preventing and stopping genocide is getting the facts in clear, indisputable form to policy makers. Some of that job is done by the news media. But conveying the information is not enough. It must be interpreted so that policy makers understand that genocidal massacres are systematic; that the portents of genocide are as compelling as warnings of a hurricane. Then options for action must be suggested to those who make policy, and they must be lobbied to take action.

Policy makers act when they feel public pressure to act. If the international campaign is to be effective, it must build an international mass movement that will exert the political and cultural pressure on world leaders necessary to create political will.

Only fifty years ago, segregation was still the law in the southern United States and less than twenty years ago apartheid still ruled South Africa. But in both the U.S. and South Africa, mass movements created the political will to change the laws and gradually the cultures of racism are changing as well. Non-violent resistance finally broke up the Soviet communist empire, once thought to be frozen forever in tyranny.

Mass movements must mobilize the religious leaders, the celebrities and stars, the churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples. We must make indifference to genocide culturally unacceptable and politically impossible. We must educate and advocate, demonstrate and legislate.

Just as the nineteenth century was the century of the movement to abolish slavery, let us make the twenty-first the century when we abolish genocide. Genocide, like slavery, is caused by human will. Human will -- including our will -- can end it.

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[2] Rummel has recently revised his estimate of the death toll from twentieth century genocide, politicide and other mass murder to 262 million. (personal communication)

[3] It is worth noting that The Military Staff Committee envisioned by Article 47 of the U.N. Charter has never been formed. It was meant to be a permanent military command that would assist the Security Council in planning application of armed force under Chapter VII (peacemaking without host country consent.)