

GROUP THREE: THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S RESPONSE



This lesson plan was developed and designed by WCL students Sarah Hymowitz and Amelia Parker.

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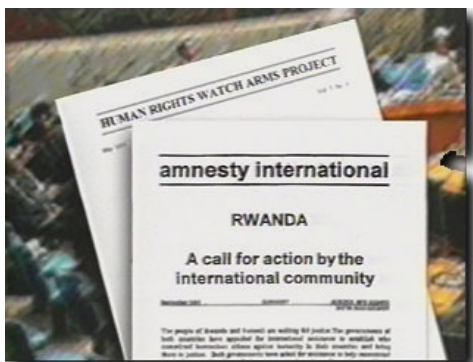
INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TO THE GENOCIDE

I. A CALL FOR HELP

During the years leading up to the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, international human rights groups documented and reported numerous human rights violations in Rwanda to the United Nations. These included putting people in jail for their political views, killing members of opposition political parties and more.

United Nations officials ignored warnings from one of the planners of the genocide who contacted a UN force commander in Rwanda, Major General Roméo Dallaire, three months before the genocide. The informant told Dallaire of Hutu plans to kill every Tutsi in Rwanda. Dallaire sent a message to New York, asking for protection of the informant. He also asked for additional troops to help prevent the planned violence from occurring. The UN denied Dallaire's request for additional troops.

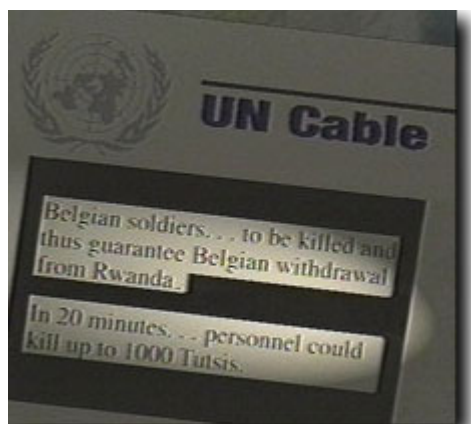
Everything the informant told Dallaire came true three months later.



Graphic: Amnesty International Film *Forgotten Cries*



Major General Roméo Dallaire
Photo: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/>



Graphic: Amnesty International Film *Forgotten Cries*

II. EARLY WARNING SIGNS – THE TOOLS OF GENOCIDE

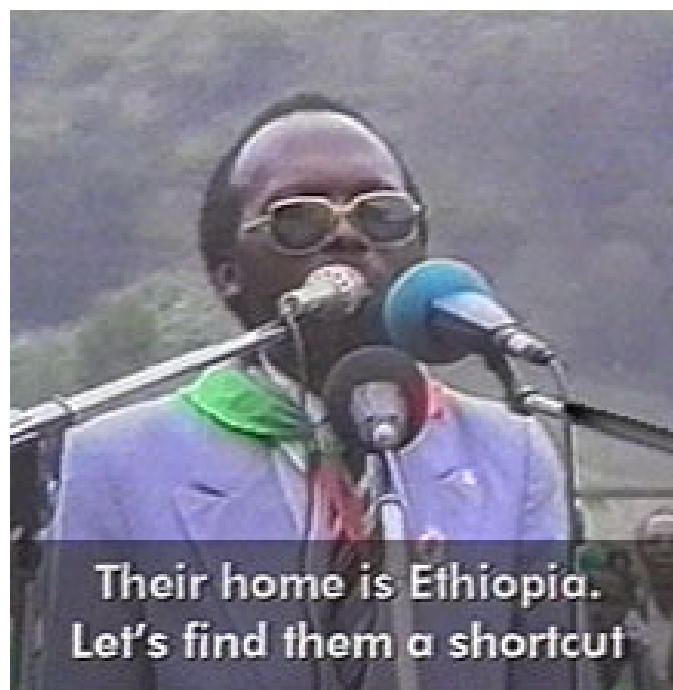
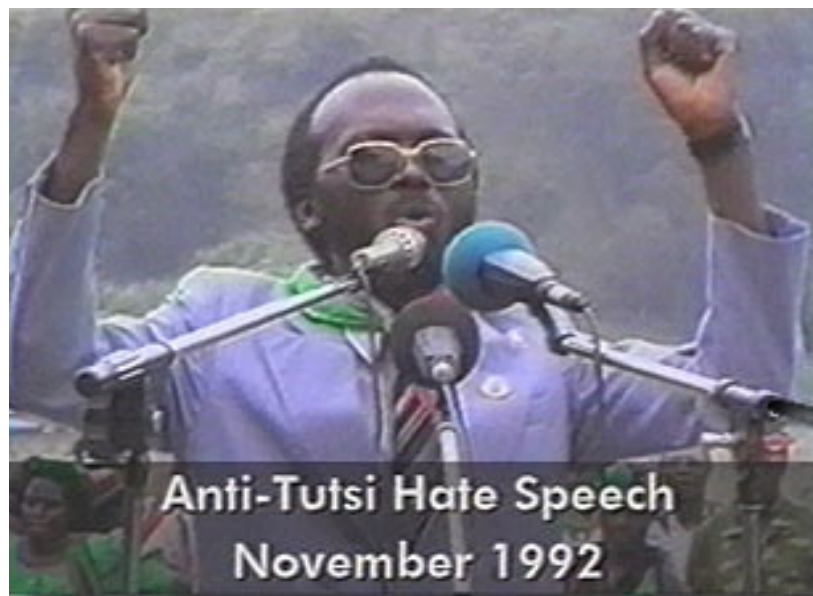


Photo: Amnesty International Film *Forgotten Cries*

Warning signs of the genocide came from other sources as well. The training of militia in Rwanda was conducted in the open. The perpetrators of the genocide distributed weapons like guns and machetes openly. The government also openly sponsored hate propaganda throughout Rwanda through the radio, newspapers and the schools. “Death lists” were developed and openly circulated with names and addresses of Tutsis who should be targeted for murder.

The hate propaganda portrayed Tutsis as evil and manipulative people who were cockroaches and snakes and whose ultimate goal was to regain power and return Rwanda to a country that mistreated the Hutu people.

Alain Destexhe, author of a book on the Rwandan genocide said that “They used to say you have to shorten the Tutsi, who are supposed to be taller than the Hutu. So in Rwanda, when the radio military used to say you have to shorten the Tutsis, everyone understood that you have to kill them.”



Cartoon: Amnesty International Film *Forgotten Cries*

III. BETRAYAL BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Once the killings began, the violence escalated quickly. Representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross estimated that within two weeks from the start of the genocide, 100,000 people had been murdered. Two weeks later, over 300,000 people had been killed. Yet, while the killings continued, the United Nations Security Council decided, primarily at the urging of Belgium and the U.S., to remove its peacekeeping forces.



As a response to the Holocaust in which six million Jews had been systematically exterminated by the Nazi regime, the international community adopted an agreement which supporters thought would ensure that genocide would never happen again. Entitled the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Genocide Convention), the international agreement officially gave a name to mass killings and abuse which aimed to wipe out an entire community based on a specific characteristic such as religion, nationality, ethnicity or race. It also established a legal obligation under which the

international community would be legally obligated to intervene and stop the violence, if genocide were found to be occurring in the world.

Because of this, the international community was very hesitant to call the killings in Rwanda a “genocide.” Although the international community knew about the extremely brutal attacks taking place, they chose not to intervene. Indeed, the UN withdrew most of its troops and officially limited the actions of the tiny force of 450 soldiers who stayed behind.

After the international community withdrew, the militia intensified the genocide, targeting resisters and officials who opposed the genocide.

According to estimates made by Amnesty International, action could have easily been taken to stop the killings and incitement. Radio broadcasts which sent people on murdering rampages could have been blocked. A small force of a few thousand troops with strong weapons could have overwhelmed the weak militias. What was needed was a message from the international community that what was happening was unacceptable and would not be tolerated. That message never came. If it had, perhaps the genocide could have been stopped.

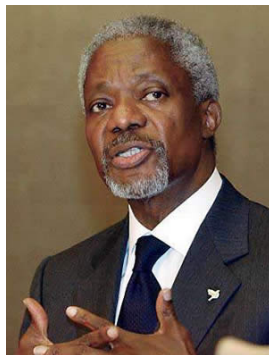


IV. APOLOGY OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

After the 100 days of killing stopped, the international community recognized the extent of the genocide and the effects of their failure to act. The international community then began a process of self-reflection. The UN conducted an investigation into the genocide and the international community's role in it. This report concluded that the international community was guilty of failing to act when the people of Rwanda needed it.

On May 7, 1998 in Kigali, Rwanda, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan apologized before the Parliament of Rwanda. He said:

"... The world must deeply repent this failure. Rwanda's tragedy was the world's tragedy. All of us who cared about Rwanda, all of us who witnessed its suffering, fervently wish that we could have prevented the genocide. Looking back now, we see the signs which then were not recognized. Now we know that what we did was not nearly enough--not enough to save Rwanda from itself, not enough to honor the ideals for which the United Nations exists. We will not deny that, in their greatest hour of need, the world failed the people of Rwanda ..."



UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.

Photo: http://www.ccmep.org/2003_articles/Iraq/042403_us_bridles_as_un.htm

Also in 1998, President Clinton also apologized to the victims of the Rwandan genocide. He said:

"... the international community, together with nations in Africa, must bear its share of responsibility for this tragedy, as well. We did not act quickly enough after the killing began. We should not have allowed the refugee camps to become safe havens for the killers. We did not immediately call these crimes by their rightful name: genocide. We cannot change the past. But we can and must do everything in our power to help you build a future without fear, and full of hope ..."



Photo: <http://www.rnw.nl/>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) When did UN officials receive warnings about the genocide?
- 2) Besides the warning given by one of the planners, what were other warning signs of the genocide?
- 3) How did state-sponsored propaganda present the Tutsi group?
- 4) What prevented the international community from calling the violence in Rwanda “genocide”?
What would have happened if they had?
- 5) Once the international community withdrew its troops, what did the militia decide to do?
- 6) Who does President Clinton say must share responsibility for the genocide?

TALKING POINTS

- The international community ignored warning signs of the genocide.
- The government used the media and the school system to broadcast racist ideas about the Tutsis and to incite violence.
- Although the international community had agreed after the Holocaust to intervene if genocide happened again in the world, they failed to do so in Rwanda.
- The United States and Belgium urged the United Nations to remove its troops from Rwanda during the genocide.
- The genocide might have been stopped if the international community had been willing to get involved.
- In 90 days, nearly one million innocent and unarmed people were killed – nearly 1/3 of all of the Tutsis on earth were wiped out.
- Years later, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and US President Bill Clinton apologized to the Rwandan people, saying that they should have done more to stop the genocide.

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CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN LAW**

The Rwanda Commemoration Project: Genocide In Our Time

First They Came for the Jews

First they came for the Jews
and I did not speak out
because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for the Communists
and I did not speak out
because I was not a Communist.
Then they came for the trade unionists
and I did not speak out
because I was not a trade unionist.
Then they came for me
and there was no one left
to speak out for me.

Pastor Martin Niemöller, 1945