

Factors Facilitating or Impeding Genocide

By Dr. Gregory Stanton

President, Genocide Watch

Armenia, the Holocaust, Ukraine, Tibet, Bangladesh, Cambodia, East Timor, Burundi, Uganda, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Iraq, Bosnia, Southern Sudan, the Congo, Darfur.

Instead of "Never Again", the history of the twentieth century was "again and again." In this new century, genocides in the Congo and Darfur continue today.

Why? Why does the world still have genocides? The same question could have been asked about slavery in the nineteenth century. The answer is that this crime is committed by human will. But we have not yet mustered the human will to stop it.

I was once a Fulbright Professor of Law in Swaziland, when South Africa was still in the evil grip of apartheid. Whenever I crossed into South Africa, I had to fill out a form at the border that asked me my race. I simply wrote "human." The South African border guards were usually annoyed. They crossed out human and wrote in, "Caucasian." I told them I wasn't from the Caucasus. Ultimately, the reason there are still genocides is that the circle we draw around our own people - those who are "us" - is still too small to include the entire human race.

There are still genocides for two reasons: we have not developed adequate international institutions to overrule national sovereignty when governments murder their own citizens. And the world's leaders do not have the political will to risk the lives of their own nations' citizens to prevent and stop genocide against others.

We have not yet built the international institutions that can stop genocide when a nation-state's leaders decide to commit it. Theoretically, the United Nations Security Council has the authority to override the presumptions of state sovereignty and non-intervention. But in fact, even when governments forfeit their legitimate right to govern by committing massive crimes against their own citizens, the United Nations has been powerless to act. The U.N. Security Council was long paralyzed by the Cold War and vetoes by its permanent five members. But even since the murderous utopias of communism fell in the 1990's, when the idols to the serial killers Lenin and Stalin were pulled down from thousands of public squares, the Security Council has failed to prevent genocide. In fact, the members of the Security Council actually withdrew 2,500 U.N. peacekeepers from Rwanda, who might have saved hundreds of thousands of lives. We are now seeing a repeat performance of U.N. failure in Darfur.

Helen Fein, Barbara Hartf, and Matthew Krain have identified six factors that indicate a high risk of genocide: 1. Prior genocides in the same polity that have gone unpunished or are still denied. 2. Autocracy. 3. Political upheaval during war or revolution. 4. Dehumanizing ideology, especially based on race, ethnicity, or class. 5. Ethnic minority rule. 6. Closure of borders to international trade.

Knowing these risk factors is not enough. We must also be able to identify the early warning signs of developing genocide the way geologists can spot the warning signs of an earthquake or a volcanic eruption. The world has cultural fault lines where genocide is most likely to break out and hot spots where genocidal eruptions are most likely. One of them is Africa's Great Rift Valley. It is aptly named, both geologically and culturally. It runs through Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, and Ethiopia into Palestine and Israel.

One of the great problems in prediction is that up to now, no model has been constructed that explains how nearly all genocides progress. To address that need which is urgent for policy makers, when I was in the State Department, I proposed a model of the genocidal process. Genocide develops in eight logical, but not inexorable stages.

The eight stages of genocide are: classification (us vs. them), symbolization (yellow stars, blue scarves), dehumanization (vermin, traitors), organization (hate group), polarization (eliminate moderates), preparation (expropriation, disarmament of victims, concentration, training and armament of killers, trial massacres), extermination (genocide), and denial. Each stage has possible counter-measures. The best prevention against genocide is fully enfranchised democracy in which an aware citizenry demands that their leaders take action to prevent genocide.

The Armenian genocide, the Holocaust, and the Rwandan genocide should teach us that early warning alone does not prevent genocide, because there were plenty of early warnings. The warnings must reach people who can act on them, people who make public policy, and those people must be politically compelled to act. Today the warnings of another genocide and ethnic cleansing in Sudan are loud and clear. Over seven hundred thousand African refugees have fled into Chad while government-armed militias murder, rape and pillage their way across Darfur. 300,000 people have already died. Yet a U.N. commission still says it isn't genocide, an act of denial like the denial Armenians have lived with for ninety years.

Like 1915 in Armenia and 1994 in Rwanda, the UN and Western governments will send assistance to refugee camps, much of it too late to save the starving, thirsty, dying people of Darfur and their animals, but will the UN and

the West act to overthrow the genocidal government in Khartoum? I doubt it. It might upset the peace process. Diplomats always want peace processes, even when, like the Arusha peace process for Rwanda in 1993 and 1994 they become sideshows that distract attention from the genocide or ethnic cleansing that are going on in the main tent.

This comes from a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of genocide. Because genocide is not conflict. It is one-sided mass murder. The Jews had no conflict with the Nazis. Armenians posed no threat to Turks. Ukrainian farmers did not fight Stalin's Communist cadres. Bengalis did not try to Pakistanis. Tutsis did not advocate mass murder of Hutus in Rwanda in 1994. Yet all of these groups were victims of genocide. Conflict resolution is not genocide prevention.

Since the founding of the United Nations in 1945 there have been at least 55 genocides and politicides. Over seventy million people have died, most murdered by their own governments, more than in all the wars combined. Genocide, unlike other human rights violations, can never be prevented or punished unless the government that perpetrates the crime is forcefully restrained or overthrown. And that is why the United Nations has largely been ineffective in preventing genocide. The UN is an association of states represented by governments that wave the flag of sovereignty whenever anyone challenges their domestic jurisdiction over internal affairs. Many of them in fact seem to believe that they have what Leo Kuper called the "sovereign right to commit genocide".

Once paralysed by the great power of veto during the Cold War, the UN is now paralysed by unwillingness of great powers to subject their policies to

criticism, and fear among illegitimate governments that scrutiny of their human rights violations might invite intervention by international forces. Nevertheless, I believe that the United Nations remains our best hope to overcome the idolatry of national sovereignty in favour of the popular sovereignty that was advocated here in England by Locke, in France by Rousseau, in the United States by Jefferson, and around the world by many other people.

An underlying premise of the Genocide Convention is that any regime that commits genocide forfeits its legitimacy and should be subject to the authority of international law and international intervention. The UN Security Council has the responsibility to protect against threats to international peace and security.

Rwanda and Bosnia should teach the world that genocide is never simply an internal matter. Genocidal regimes never stop their predatory murders at their own borders, and they always bleed refugees. As Raphael Lemkin emphasized, genocide is a crime against all of humanity because it permanently reduces the cultural diversity that is humanity's heritage.

TO BE OMITTED FROM SPOKEN PRESENTATION

Darfur, Sudan is not the only place where genocide is underway or about to happen. Three million people have died in the Congo since 1996. How many of you know that in December 2003 the Ethiopian army and highlander militias massacred over 400 Anuaks in the lowland town of Gambella? And the murders and the mass rapes continue. Thousands of refugees fled to Sudan. The world hasn't noticed. Gambella province, where oil and gas were discovered four years ago, is a destination for resettled highlanders and the Ethiopian government has now declared that it's going to resettle one million highlanders into lowland areas of Ethiopia. These aren't early warnings, they're late alarms.

The question is, will the UN or the great powers act? Will the African Union -

which is headquartered in Addis Ababa - act? There are four reasons why I think they probably won't. But we have to honestly confront them if we're going to try to overcome the repeated paralysis that has characterized our responses to genocide.

The first is racism. Lives of black Africans are still not accorded equal value to lives of people from our own nationalities or races. African lives are still outside the circle of our moral concern when the cost to protect them may be the lives of our own sons and daughters. And I do not say that lightly, because my own son is a US Marine.

The second is the cult of state sovereignty and non-interference. The UN charter's prohibition on intervention on matters within the internal jurisdiction of member states has long been a license to commit genocide. And yet I do think there is cause for hope here because the Rwandan genocide has seen a renewed recognition that governments have a responsibility to protect their citizens from genocide and if they fail, or even if they commit genocide themselves, then the UN does have a responsibility to intervene. However, the UN and other powers, other regional alliances can only do so effectively when a major military power is willing to take the lead. The recently augmented European Union forces in Eastern Congo and the French forces in Cote d'Ivoire and soon the UN peacekeeping force in Cote d'Ivoire are signs of hope. They are the result of a strong UN Secretary General and French leadership. And likewise, the United Kingdom has taken the lead in Sierra Leone to stop the arm-amputating, murderous criminal gangs of Foday Sankoh and Charles Taylor. There is hope, I think, for intervention to stop genocide.

A third reason is impunity. Neither Sudan nor Ethiopia are state parties to the Rome Treaty of the International Criminal Court. In fact, less than half of African

states are. Russia, China, India, Pakistan and, yes, the United States, are also not state parties to the ICC. They represent half of the human race. Nigeria and Indonesia aren't even parties to the genocide convention. So many of the world's leaders know that they can commit genocide, ethnic cleansing and other crimes against humanity and get away with it. Unless, of course, they're overthrown and tried in national courts. But, by then they will have fled into exile and their relatives will be sending us e-mails about fortunes squirrelled away in Swiss banks.

The fourth reason, I believe, is that we just don't care enough to send our very best. UN rules of engagement, in fact, are weak. They are cowardly covers for the moral relativism of neutrality. And in genocide, only the stars in the sky can be neutral.

If we're going to prevent future genocides I think we need to construct several new international institutions. First, and I think very, very welcome, was the UN Secretary General's appointment of a Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Juan Mendez - a person of international stature, to serve high in the United Nations, supported by UN agencies, with the kind of resources he or she will need to give early warning far in advance of genocides. For Special Adviser Juan Mendez to be effective, he will need a professional staff larger than the two assistants the U.N. has given him. He should be supported by a Genocide Prevention Center of experts who daily monitor the globe. Using models for early warning developed by experts on genocide, the special adviser should recommend strategies for prevention in the volcanic hotspots on the fault lines of the world before they erupt into genocide.

The United States, the European Union and other key governments should create similar genocide prevention working groups in their foreign

ministries. To stop genocide, the permanent five members on the Security Council should agree not to use their vetoes when a majority of the Council determine that genocide is underway.

Second, If the U.N. will not act, regional military alliances should do so instead. Regional organisations like NATO, the European Union, and the African Union, should create rapid response forces of heavy infantry fully supported by airlifts, communications and supplies that are ready to intervene within days of the beginning of a genocide. The UN should have a standing military staff committee as envisioned under articles 43-47 of the U.N. Charter. Rules of engagement for peacekeepers should be strengthened now, so they are mandated to protect civilians with force, not monitor their murders as they did in Srebrenica and are now doing in Darfur. Eventually the United Nations needs a standing, volunteer rapid reaction force to intervene quickly whenever the Security Council decides to send it.

Third, states party to the International Criminal Court, especially in Europe, should launch a co-ordinated diplomatic campaign for universal membership in the International Criminal Court. Referral of the situation in Darfur to the ICC by the Security Council was an historic blow against the cult of national sovereignty and impunity.

Finally, we will need to create the political will in our leaders to prevent and stop genocide. The creation of political will is not some kind of mystery. We create political will by creating political movements that make it clear to political leaders that voters will not put up with "I didn't know" or "it was too late" or "we couldn't act." We make it clear to them that we will no longer tolerate inaction in the face of genocide. I come from a family that's been active in a couple of these political movements to create political will.

My great-great-grandfather was an abolitionist who attended the first world anti-slavery convention in London in 1840, and he was secretary to that convention. And my great-great-grandmother, his wife, was Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who founded the women's suffrage movement in the United States. So you can see - I come from a long line of trouble-makers.

I am convinced that today, in the 21 st century, we need a movement to prevent genocide equivalent to the anti-slavery movement of the 19th century, and to the women's movement of the 19th and 20th century. We need a movement that will tap the power of every church and mosque and synagogue and temple to create a constituency of conscience, to tell our political leaders that we will no longer be bystanders to genocide, or we will vote them out of office.

Ninety years ago, the world abandoned Armenia. Sixty years ago, the world abandoned the Jews of Europe. Eleven years ago, the world abandoned Rwanda. Million of people died, murdered by their neighbours. We watched and like the men who walked past the wounded man on the road to Jericho, we passed by on the other side.

Genocide unfolded over Armenia like a shroud. The eyes of our conscience were blind and our souls' ears were deaf to the victims' cries. Today we have heard the anguish of the survivors. We have tried to count the cost of our indifference.

But the Armenian genocide, the Holocaust, and the Rwanda genocide, committed in the darkness of moonless nights, in the ebb tide of our compassion, were also watersheds for international justice. From them flowed the United Nations, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and at high tide the nations of the world finally created the International Criminal Court envisioned by the framers of the Genocide Convention in 1948. The European Union and the

African Union have declared their intent to establish rapid response forces to intervene and stop genocide and there's a strong current for democracy that's running around the world.

The question we must ask today is: can genocide be prevented? I think the answer is that genocide is caused by human will and it can be prevented by human will. Ultimately, preventing genocide means creating the political will in our leaders to lead. We must tell them that never again will we believe them when they say that they didn't know. Never again will we excuse them when they fail to act. Never again will we - all humans, all members of the same race, the human race - never again will we let the apocalyptic scourge of genocide cover the earth with human blood.

Never again.