

NEXT STEPS TOWARD GENOCIDE PREVENTION

PLENARY PANEL

DR. CAROL RITTNER RSM (CHAIRPERSON, TRACK 4)

THE RICHARD STOCKTON COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY (USA) AND EDITOR OF THE AEGIS REVIEW

Your Highness, Mr. Prime Minister, Honorable Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen: I, too, would like to thank Prime Minister Person and the Swedish government for convening the 2004 Forum, "Preventing Genocide: Threats and Responsibilities." The speeches and statements have been impressive; the input from scholars and practitioners, thoughtful; and, the discussion during the various workshop sessions provocative, but speeches and statements, papers, and discussion about genocide prevention are not enough. We must move from words to deeds.

Based on the presentations and discussions in Track 4, "Creating Awareness: Education, Media, Memory," the following are my suggestions regarding "Next Steps Toward Genocide Prevention." Allow me, however, to begin with a statement:

Action on behalf of potential victims of genocide, mass killings, and ethnic cleansing, and action on behalf of survivors of genocide, mass killings, and ethnic cleansing are constituent dimensions of genocide prevention.

Genocide, mass death, and ethnic cleansing are not on the decline, either in incidence or scale. In more ways than one, genocide's perpetrators have the upper hand: Tribunals prosecute perpetrators of genocide after the fact, if at all. If the courts are to be a credible deterrent, they have to act swiftly, thoroughly, and decisively. Such things are easier said than done.

Early warning systems and other preventative measures try to anticipate the worst before it happens, but their effectiveness thus far has been more in the realm of hope than fact.

Standing between prevention and prosecution is intervention, but the genocidal debacles in the Balkans and Rwanda, not to mention the continuing mass killings in Nigeria, Sudan, and Congo, are scarcely causes for optimism where intervention is concerned. Today we know that forceful intervention in Bosnia and Rwanda could have prevented the worst offenses in those regions. Of course regrets have been expressed about the failure to intervene- everyone from former American President Bill Clinton to current United Nations Secretary General Kofi Anan, and others, I'm sure, have expressed such regrets- but such apologetic hindsight does nothing for the murdered and relatively little to encourage confidence in survivors, or, if I may say so, in those who are potential victims of genocide, mass killings, and ethnic cleansing that the world's response to genocidal threats will be better "next time."

What, then, could inspire confidence in such people? Perhaps the following:

First, If you want to prevent genocide, protect women and children.

Governments must recognize that "When the killing stops, the genocide is not over." The consequences of genocide "are severe, long term and complex." It is when the killing stops that the most important phrase of prevention begins- that is, the rehabilitation of victims and their societies. In this phase of prevention – and make no mistake about it, it is a phase of prevention -action on behalf of the rehabilitation of victims and their societies is more than important; it is crucial, for if we do not care for the victims, in both the short term and in

the long term, we risk the explosion of potentially negative consequences for society. As Dr. James Smith of The Aegis Trust in the United Kingdom pointed, there is a very real danger "that the roles of perpetrators and victims [will] become reversed in the struggle for new identity and personal security."³

Esther Mujavajo, herself a survivor of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, movingly, poignantly, and angrily told us how, at the height of the killings, the French and the Belgians evacuated their nationals, including their nationals' dogs and cats, but would not evacuate her three children, although she begged them to do so. Today, Ms. Mugavajo, one of the founders of AVEGA, the Widows' organization in Rwanda, works with women and children in Rwanda, and in the diaspora, including women and children who were infected with AIDS, and she told us how she is unable to obtain financial help- as little as US\$30 per person per month -to obtain drugs for these women to help keep them alive, but how some of the major donor nations, including, no doubt, France and Belgium, and I am sure, my own United States, help to "support the care" of the suspected genocidaires awaiting trial by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) and who are being held in the over-crowded Rwandan prisons.

Aside from the moral issue, this kind of long-term post-genocide neglect of survivors of the genocide fosters resentment in them and surely does not contribute either to their rehabilitation, their re-humanization, or their reconciliation with members of the Hutu community in Rwanda. I suspect the same thing is true in former Yugoslavia:

long-term, practical neglect of so many thousands of women who were raped, forcibly impregnated, and, in many instances, infected with AIDS and are now dying by inches because they cannot afford the drugs to fight their disease, and no one seems to care.

Second Suggestion: If the men of this world want to prevent genocide, I suggest some men organize a high-level, high profile conference for men about why men use rape as a weapon of genocide.

As Professor Melissa Raphael pointed out in her option paper prepared for Track IV, "... it is now recognized that rape is not 'merely' the private 'off-duty' crime of soldiers relieving their sexual frustration (as was assumed during the Nuremberg trials and until the late 20th century mass rape of Muslim women in former Yugoslavia and Tutsi women in Rwanda)."

Rape is not a woman's problem, it is a man's problem, and it is men who should ask Why? What can be done to stop such violent behavior of men against women? and, How can we [men] change?

The 2004 Stockholm Forum should lead to action by men to stop other men from such behavior at any time but most especially in a time of conflict, war, and genocide. It is men who should be in the forefront of advocating for long-term, post-genocide care for the victims of such male behavior.

3. Suggestion number three regarding next steps for the prevention of genocide picks up on the statement made by Archbishop Celestino Migliore, the Vatican's Permanent Observer at the United Nations. He said,

... my delegation wishes to underscore ... our duty to educate individuals and communities not only on the horrors of genocide, not only to oppose it, but above all, to prevent it from occurring again. A lot has already been learned about genocide. But educating all about its evil is a perennial and ever-timely duty incumbent upon us all.

It was in this sense, for example, the U.N. General Assembly unanimously adopted resolution 58/234, on 23 December 2003, designating 7 of April this year as the International Day of Reflection to commemorate the victims of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.'

My strong suggestion is that if the Holy See wants to prevent genocide, this recommendation should be shared with every Catholic Church in communion with the Holy See and the Pope, John Paul II, put the full weight of his moral authority behind persuading every bishop in every diocese in every country throughout the world to encourage the Catholic people in his diocese to do exactly what is stated in the United Nation's resolution and in Archbishop Migliore's statement: "to educate individuals and communities, not only on the horrors of genocide, not only to oppose it, but above all, to prevent it from occurring **again.**"

As we know, religion can be a powerful and persuasive force in genocide prevention. The negative examples of Rwanda, former Yugoslavia, and the Holocaust bear witness to this claim, for virtually all analysts of those genocides are convinced that they could have been prevented, or stopped, or at least ameliorated, if strong religious protests against the genocides had been raised.

Religion can separate people; it can legitimate violence that is genocidal. But, if the quality of religious life improves by becoming less exclusive and more inclusive, so will the odds in favour of genocide prevention. I applaud Archbishop Migliore and his statement, which I am sure was made with the full knowledge and support of the Vatican, but like all of our resolutions, statements, discussions and suggestions, it must move from words to actions.

These then are my suggestions regarding Next Steps to the Prevention of Genocide:

1. If you want to prevent genocide, protect women and children;
2. If men want to prevent genocide, they should organize and convene a high level, high profile conference about why they use rape as a weapon of genocide and how they can stop it; and,
3. If the Vatican wants to prevent genocide, the Pope, John Paul II, should immediately move to support a day of reflection to commemorate the victims of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and persuade every Roman Catholic bishop in every Catholic diocese in the world to do likewise.

Thank you.

Notes

'Stephen Smith as quoted in James Smith, "Dealing with the Aftermath-Breaking the Cycle of Hatred and Violence." Stockholm International Forum 2004 Option Papers, p. 37.

zIbid.

elbid, pp. 35-36.

•Melissa Raphael, "Research on Genocide and Sexual Violence." Stockholm International Forum 2004 Option Papers, p. 43.

,27 January 2004 Statement by Archbishop Celestino Migliore (Holy See) at the Stockholm International Forum 2004, p. 3.