

# The Response of the International Community to the Rwanda Genocide

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this essay is to assess the international community's response to the Rwanda genocide with a particular focus on the United States. The period under study is between April 6, 1994 and July 1, 1994, during which time the major campaign of killing took place. It also analyzes the aftermath of the genocide in terms of the inner workings and procedures of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). By studying the response of the international community both during the genocide and in the aftermath, with a specific focus on the ICTR, I gained knowledge of the way the international community views the genocide and the value or importance it places on the genocide. To accurately evaluate the international community's position during the Rwandan genocide I studied current literature on the genocide, U.S. Federal documents and memos, newspaper and magazine coverage in 1994 on the genocide, and speeches or comments made by U.S. Federal government officials about the genocide. Studying these sources gave me a well-rounded view of how the world reacted to the genocide as it unfolded. The second half of my research took place in Arusha, Tanzania at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. I toured the United Nations facility, viewed an official film on the inner workings and accomplishments of the tribunal, and sat in on a briefing given by an ICTR official. By experiencing the tribunal personally I was able to gather information about its goals, difficulties it faces, and its successes. This information helps explain the stance the international community currently takes on the genocide of 1994. Overall, the project has been one of comparing and contrasting reactions of the international community during the genocide and in its aftermath. By doing so, I have gained a valuable perspective on the importance of the genocide in the eyes of the world.

## INTRODUCTION

### *Historical Background*

To fully comprehend the Rwanda genocide it is first crucial to understand the background and history of Rwanda. To begin, there are two main ethnic groups that live in Rwanda: Hutus and Tutsis. Hutus are the obvious majority, comprising roughly 84% of the population, while Tutsis make up about 15%.<sup>1</sup> There is also a very small group of indigenous peoples named Twa that includes about 1% of the people in Rwanda. Although it cannot be verified, legend claims that Hutus settled Rwanda before Tutsis, an idea that is still greatly debated today. What is clear to historians, however, is that the two groups migrated to Rwanda from different regions. Hutus are thought to have originated from South and West Africa, while Tutsis arrived from the North and East. Despite their different origins, the two groups easily merged together and formed a single civilization.<sup>2</sup> In fact, Hutus and Tutsis intermarried, spoke the same language, and practiced the same religion. Indeed, due to the mixing between the two peoples, ethnographers and historians recently have declared that Hutus and Tutsis cannot be separated as two distinct ethnic groups. More likely, the two groups arranged themselves into a class or caste system. However, even while Hutus and Tutsis lived together in peace in pre-colonial Rwanda, distinctions remained between them. For example, the majority of Hutus were cultivators whereas Tutsis typically worked as herdsmen. This difference in occupations is what historians refer to as the "original inequality" between the two groups, in large part because cattle held a greater value in society than did produce. Thus, based on their occupation, Tutsis held both a political

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Barnett, *Eyewitness to a Genocide: The United Nations and Rwanda* (New York, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform you that Tomorrow we will be Killed with our Families: Stories from Rwanda* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1998), 47.

and economic advantage over Hutus.<sup>3</sup> Yet, even despite the early distinctions between them, there were still no known hostilities between Hutus and Tutsis during Rwanda's early history.

Although Hutus and Tutsis coexisted peacefully for the majority of Rwanda's pre-colonial history, a rift between the two groups slowly began to form. In pre-colonial Rwanda, the territory was ruled by mwamis or chiefs. Although there were no restrictions on the ethnicity of the mwami, the majority of them were Tutsi. In 1860 a Tutsi mwami named Kigeri Rwabugiri came to power and began to rapidly expand his domain.<sup>4</sup> Through vigorous political and military campaigns he eventually took control of almost all of what is present day Rwanda. During his rule, Rwabugiri openly favored Tutsis over Hutus; indeed, historians count his reign as one of the major turning points in relations between the two peoples. Under Rwabugiri, Tutsis were placed in top political and military positions and essentially became an aristocratic class, while Hutus occupied the lower rungs of society and were seen simply as vassals. As the gap between the social and economic status of Tutsis and Hutus widened, the two groups began to form different ideas about what it meant to be a Hutu or a Tutsi in order to distinguish themselves from each other. Soon enough these distinctions in status became associated with physical traits. For example, Hutus were known to be shorter, dark-skinned people with flat noses and thicker lips. Tutsis, on the other hand, were taller and lighter-skinned with narrow noses and thin lips.<sup>5</sup> This idea of an overt physical distinction between the two groups played a huge role in the Rwanda genocide and is still alive today. However, appearances are not always as they seem and due to the vast mixing of the two peoples during Rwanda's early history, it is extremely difficult to tell whether a person is a Hutu or a Tutsi based on physical characteristics alone.

In 1894 Mwami Rwabugiri died and the country was plunged into violent and chaotic fighting between Tutsi clans over the question of succession.<sup>6</sup> With the country weakened and lacking a strong central government, Germany saw its opportunity and invaded in 1897.<sup>7</sup> The Germans easily took control of Rwanda and set up administrative offices to be used in a system of indirect rule. Under German rule Tutsis were recognized as the elite race and were protected and placed in prestigious positions within the colonial administration thus segregating the Hutus and Tutsis even more.

At the close of World War I, the League of Nations stripped Germany of its colonies and gave control of Rwanda to Belgium instead. The Belgians' colonial policies were based on a divide and conquer approach in which they tried to further polarize Hutus and Tutsis. Like their German counterparts, the Belgians immediately recognized the "superiority" of Tutsis over Hutus based solely upon their physical appearance. To the Belgians, Tutsis looked more "European" with their statuesque frames and lighter skin. Belgians became so obsessed with dividing the country along ethnic lines that they even brought scientists into Rwanda with the sole purpose of finding measurable physical differences between Hutus and Tutsis. For example, scientists weighed Rwandans, measured cranial capacities, and compared the protuberance of their noses. To the Belgians, the most noteworthy of the scientists' findings was that the median Tutsi nose was about 2.5 mm longer than a Hutu's and about 5 mm narrower.<sup>8</sup> This difference in nose structure somehow proved to the scientists that Tutsis were of a "nobler" birth.

Consequently, Tutsis were heavily favored under the Belgian colonial regime and were actively encouraged to exploit Hutus. In fact, one of the main mantras of the regime was "You whip the Hutu or we will whip you."<sup>9</sup> A system of forced labor developed in which Hutus were required to work on plantations, on road construction, or in forestry crews with Tutsis as their overlords. Hutus became so exhausted from their forced labor obligations that they neglected their traditional occupation as cultivators and Rwanda was repeatedly stricken by famine. The almost constant state of famine served to make conditions even more unbearable for the already impoverished and exploited Hutus. Finally, as a last step to ensure that Rwandans would constantly be aware of their ethnicity, in 1933 the Belgians issued ethnic identity cards to all citizens.<sup>10</sup> The cards labeled a person as Hutu, Tutsi, or Twa and also included their name and residence. Everyone was forced to carry their card with them at all times, a regulation that proved very useful to the killers during the genocide. Thus, the Belgians gradually manufactured hostility and bitterness between Hutus and Tutsis and the idea of a national identity in Rwanda was all but lost.

By the close of World War II Hutus had reached their breaking point. They demanded independence from Belgium and wanted the country to be left in the hands of the majority, the Hutus. The Belgians, exhausted from fighting WWII and eager to avoid another war, willingly gave their support to Hutus thereby swiftly abandoning

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<sup>3</sup> Gourevitch, 48.

<sup>4</sup> Gourevitch, 48.

<sup>5</sup> Jared Cohen, *100 Days of Silence: America and the Rwanda Genocide* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), 11.

<sup>6</sup> Gourevitch, 49.

<sup>7</sup> Gourevitch, 54.

<sup>8</sup> Gourevitch, 56.

<sup>9</sup> Gourevitch, 57.

<sup>10</sup> Cohen, 11.

their beloved Tutsis. Indeed, to the Belgians, leaving the country in the hands of the Hutus seemed the easiest way out. For while Belgium was distracted by WWII Hutus had gradually been gaining more power in Rwanda and they would soon organize around a document called the Hutu Manifesto. The Hutu Manifesto was created by nine Hutu intellectuals in 1957.<sup>11</sup> It stressed that democracy meant rule by those with the most numbers and therefore opposed the elimination of ethnic identity cards in fear of losing the statistical fact of their majority. However, the Manifesto above all stressed “Hutuness”. Hutuness was primarily a new, strong unity among Hutus based on ethnic solidarity and superiority. It stressed purity among Hutus and did not tolerate or allow room for other ethnicities, both of which proved to be dangerous ideals. The Hutu Manifesto’s ethnic attitudes were eventually adopted as the core principles of a group of Hutu extremists who formed the Hutu Power movement.

On November 1, 1959 a Hutu administrative official, Dominique Mbonyumutwa, was beaten by a group of Tutsis.<sup>12</sup> After years of pent up hostility and aggression, the violence against that one Hutu lit the spark for an outbreak of violence between Hutus and Tutsis to begin. Just 24 hours after the beating of Mbonyumutwa, groups of Hutus roamed across the country spontaneously attacking Tutsis and burning their homes. The Belgians eventually intervened and removed Tutsis from their administrative posts in order to appease Hutus and end the violence. Although momentarily abated, this uprising was known as the Hutu Revolution or the “wind of destruction” and would last for another six years leaving 20,000 Tutsis dead and over 300,000 of them refugees.<sup>13</sup>

In 1960, against the backdrop of the Hutu Revolution, the Hutus received their first major political victory. Elections were held and, with Hutus presiding over the polling stations, Hutus won 90% of the top governmental posts.<sup>14</sup> A provisional government was put in place led by Gregoire Kayibanda, one of the authors of the Hutu Manifesto. In 1961 the Belgians met with Hutu leaders and officially abolished the Rwandan monarchy thus transforming the country into a republic. Rwanda was finally granted full independence in 1962 and Kayibanda was inaugurated as its first president. Kayibanda was a dull leader and he believed that he needed to keep the spirit of the revolution alive in order to maintain credibility. Therefore, he openly encouraged the violence against Tutsis to continue while also denying Tutsis access to education, public employment, and military service in order to maintain a system of official discrimination.<sup>15</sup>

Under Kayibanda, Rwanda was a chaotic and violent country. Kayibanda was obviously a weak and unfit leader, which left him politically vulnerable. Therefore, in July of 1973 Kayibanda’s army chief Juvenal Habyarimana easily overthrew Kayibanda. After the coup was complete Habyarimana declared himself president of the Second Republic and created his party, the National Republican Movement for Democracy and Development (MRND).<sup>16</sup> Habyarimana repeatedly emphasized the importance of peace and unity among Hutus and Tutsis and initially the violence against Tutsis subsided. International investment in the country grew as new roads were built, crime rates lowered, and health care and education improved. The French gave Habyarimana military assistance beginning in 1975 while Belgium, Switzerland, the United States, Japan, and Canada gave his regime substantial amounts of aid money. However, what the international community chose to ignore was that Habyarimana was clearly a dictator. He frequently held mass pageants of political admiration for himself, all Rwandan citizens were required to be members of the MRND, citizens could not change residence without government approval, and men serving in the military were not allowed to marry Tutsis.<sup>17</sup> Habyarimana also worked closely with members of the extremist Hutu Power movement who were bent on ideals of Hutu domination and the brutal oppression of Tutsis. The Hutu Power movement was led by a small group of radicals within Habyarimana’s own government who called themselves the *akazu*. The *akazu* and other Hutu Power leaders would hold most of the responsibility for implementing the genocide of 1994. Therefore, although on the outside it appeared that Rwanda was peacefully rebuilding itself, the country was still in the hands of an authoritarian government with Hutu Power extremists at its core.

Although the violence against Tutsis subsided under Habyarimana, perhaps a larger question was that of repatriation for the hundreds of thousands of Tutsi refugees living across the border in Uganda after fleeing from the brutality of the Hutu Revolution. What the majority of the refugees wanted was simply to return home. However, Habyarimana consistently refused them repatriation. Therefore, on October 1, 1990 a group of Tutsi refugees who had organized into a rebel army called the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) invaded Rwanda from northeast

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<sup>11</sup> Gourevitch, 58.

<sup>12</sup> Gourevitch, 59.

<sup>13</sup> Cohen, 12.

<sup>14</sup> Gourevitch, 61.

<sup>15</sup> Gourevitch, 66.

<sup>16</sup> Cohen, 12.

<sup>17</sup> Gourevitch, 70.

Uganda.<sup>18</sup> Although the assault originally began with only 50 men crossing the border, the RPF invasion plunged Rwanda into a civil war.

Recognizing the invasion as an opportunity to round up all of his enemies, Habyarimana exaggerated the scope of the attack on the country. Hutu extremists fervently told Rwandans that the Tutsis were returning to take over and rule the country as they had in past and Hutus would again be brutally marginalized. This effectively whipped the country into a frenzy and Hutus began killing Tutsis as they had under Kayibanda's rule. As the violence was again inflamed against Tutsis, more RPF troops arrived daily to fight Habyarimana's Forces Armees Rwandaises (FAR) to try to end the slaughter of their countrymen. However, although the killings were appalling, the genocide had not yet even begun.

Roughly four years into the fighting on April 6, 1994, President Habyarimana's plane was shot down when returning from a peace conference in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania where he was negotiating a ceasefire with the RPF. Hutu Power leaders immediately blamed the attack on Tutsi leaders and the RPF. In actuality, to this day it is unclear who carried out the assassination of Habyarimana. However, most evidence points to Hutu extremists within their own government. For instance, on April 3rd, three days before the assassination, the Hutu extremist-controlled radio station *Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines* (RTLM) announced that "there will be a little something here in Kigali, and also on April 7th and 8th you will hear the sound of bullets or grenades exploding."<sup>19</sup> In addition to that harrowing announcement, the Hutu Power propaganda newspaper *Kangura*, edited by Hassan Ngeze, ran a headline in March proclaiming "Habyarimana will die in March" with a cartoon depicting the president as a "Tutsi-loving accomplice" for his work on ceasefire negotiations.<sup>20</sup> Although Habyarimana's assassination did not take place until the first week in April, the message was clear that his death was a well-planned event.

Just as Hutu Power leaders had quite possibly planned the assassination of the president, the genocide itself had been carefully prepared for throughout the duration of the civil war. Hutu extremists stockpiled weapons and recruited young men to be part of youth militias for "civic defense."<sup>21</sup> One of the most infamous militias to emerge from these groups was the *interahamwe*. The *interahamwe* carried out some of the most brutal aspects of the genocide and its members had been well-trained in advance. *Interahamwe* soldiers compiled lists of the names and addresses of Tutsis to be targeted and routinely practiced burning houses, throwing grenades, and hacking up dummies with machetes in the months and years before the genocide.<sup>22</sup> In addition to stockpiling weapons and training killing mobs, the Hutu Power leaders also spewed hate speech from virtually every media channel to prepare the public for the murderous rampage they were planning. *Kangura* and the RTLM constantly aired speeches given by Hutu Power extremists denouncing Tutsis. One of the most popular of these speeches that was played almost constantly over RTLM, and was recited by the *interahamwe* religiously, was given by a Hutu Power leader named Leon Mugesera. In his speech about Tutsis Mugesera declared, "We the people are obliged to take responsibility ourselves and wipe out this scum." He also asked, "What are we waiting for to decimate these families?" and encouraged all Rwandans to "Destroy them. No matter what you do, do not let them get away."<sup>23</sup>

The manufactured fear Habyarimana created at the onslaught of the RPF invasion combined with the continuous stream of hate speech reaching most Rwandans and the assassination of Habyarimana meant that Rwanda was on the brink of total disaster. In fact, by the night of April 6, 1994, within hours of President Habyarimana's death, it was clear that the Hutu Power leaders had staged a coup d'état and that Rwanda was now in the hands of an extremist group bent on hate and the murder of Tutsis. As roadblocks went up all over Kigali obstructing the passage both in and out of the capital, it was apparent that the country was on the verge of a nightmarish event. Indeed, by the early hours of April 7th the systematic slaughter of the Tutsi people had begun.

## DISCUSSION

### *The Genocide*

On the night of April 6th bands of *interahamwe* roamed the streets of Kigali with well-prepared lists of the names and addresses of Tutsis who would be the first victims of the genocide.<sup>24</sup> The first target of the *interahamwe* was the moderate Hutu prime minister, Agathe Uwilingiyimana. Ten Belgian soldiers from the UN peacekeeping group on the ground in Rwanda, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR), quickly arrived to protect her. However, Agathe fled when the *interahamwe* arrived at her home and the UNAMIR soldiers, under

<sup>18</sup> Cohen, 13.

<sup>19</sup> Gourevitch, 110.

<sup>20</sup> Gourevitch, 108.

<sup>21</sup> Gourevitch, 93.

<sup>22</sup> Gourevitch, 93.

<sup>23</sup> Gourevitch, 97.

<sup>24</sup> Gourevitch, 114.

strict instructions to not fire their weapons, were taken as captives by the Rwandan officer in charge. The Belgians were brought to Camp Kigali, a military base, where they were tortured, murdered, and mutilated.<sup>25</sup> After this event the genocide truly erupted.

The Hutu Power leaders realized that they did not have the technological capabilities to stage the type of genocide that the Nazis carried out with the use of gas chambers and other mass murder techniques. Indeed, the machete was the most commonly used weapon during the Rwandan genocide. Since a few machetes alone could not carry out the type of murderous campaign Hutu Power leaders desired, they knew that they had to convince thousands of ordinary people to mobilize as a murderous mass and swing the machetes. This is indeed what happened. Ordinary Hutus around the entire country were convinced to kill their Tutsi neighbors after years of anti-Tutsi rhetoric and the government's use of scare tactics. The basic idea that was reiterated through the RTLM and *Kangura* was that the Tutsis had to be killed in order to protect Hutus. It created the idea of "an absolute menace that requires absolute eradication."<sup>26</sup> Certainly, it is unrealistic to think of thousands of cold-blooded murderers living in Rwanda in 1994 suddenly rising up together completely unprovoked. It must be remembered that not everybody enjoyed killing Tutsis; however, Hutus participated in the genocide in massive numbers because they had been convinced that it was necessary for their own safety and wellbeing. This type of massive participation also alleviated Hutu Power leaders' fears of accountability.

Although the leaders of the Rwanda genocide did not have the resources that Germany did during the Holocaust, the killing rate in Rwanda was still five times that of the Nazis.<sup>27</sup> Hutu militias were transported by bus around the country to carry out the massacres more efficiently. Over the next three months, through July 1st, 333 people were killed every hour, or about five people every minute.<sup>28</sup> No man, woman, or child was spared. The brutality of the genocide makes it almost unfathomable to the human mind. Pregnant women had their bellies cut open by machetes and their unborn fetuses ripped from their bodies. One of the most common ways the murderers killed their victims was by cutting off each limb and letting the person bleed to death. Indeed, the ghastly, horrific stories go on and on.

One of the most heart wrenching aspects of the genocide is the massacres that occurred in churches. In Rwanda, during times of unrest, people fled to the churches to seek safe haven. It was widely known that they would be protected in a church and that no violence could reach them. Therefore, during the genocide thousands of Tutsis fled to their local churches. However, this did not stop the murderers. In fact, having all of their victims in one place made the massacres that much easier to carry out. There were even cases in which priests alerted the *interahamwe* to Tutsis hiding in their church, and within hours the bloodthirsty militias arrived with the priest leading the way. Overall, the brutality and efficiency of the genocide is almost inconceivable and begs the question of how such atrocities could be allowed to be committed.

### *The Response of the International Community*

Shamefully, the actions the international community took during the 1994 genocide not only allowed the massacres to continue for 100 days straight but also in some ways gave the murderers permission to continue the brutality. As was previously mentioned, the UN had deployed a peacekeeping mission called the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) composed of 2,548 troops. UNAMIR's commanding officer, Canadian general Romeo Dallaire, was given the responsibility to maintain the ceasefire created by President Habyarimana, assist in humanitarian aid, and oversee the repatriation of refugees.<sup>29</sup> However, Dallaire could not effectively execute the mission he had been given by the UN for many reasons including the fact that he did not have enough troops, his soldiers were drastically under-equipped, and the mission lacked any type of intelligence unit.<sup>30</sup> To make matters worse, UNAMIR soldiers were under strict orders not to fire their weapons. After all, they were there simply as a peacekeeping group, not as a standing army.

Thus, when the genocide broke out Dallaire was absolutely helpless against the *interahamwe* and Hutu extremists. On top of all the other struggles Dallaire faced, on April 14th, a week after the murder of the ten Belgian UNAMIR soldiers, Belgium announced that it would be withdrawing all of its troops from the UNAMIR mission. This of course was the Hutu Power leaders' objective in ordering the murder of the Belgians. The events unfolding in Rwanda occurred just five weeks after 18 American rangers serving with a UN force in Somalia were killed and their bodies were dragged through the streets of Mogadishu. The graphic footage of the brutal murders struck a deep

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<sup>25</sup> Gourevitch, 114.

<sup>26</sup> Gourevitch, 95.

<sup>27</sup> L.R. Melvern, *A People Betrayed: The Role of the West in Rwanda's Genocide* (New York: Zed Books, Ltd., 2000), 4.

<sup>28</sup> Gourevitch, 125.

<sup>29</sup> Cohen, 13.

<sup>30</sup> Cohen, 13.

chord among the international community and created a severe backlash against African peacekeeping missions. Hutu Power leaders were aware of the uneasiness the international community felt at getting involved in an African mission again so soon after Mogadishu. They knew that after the murder of the ten Belgian UNAMIR peacekeepers, the international community would hesitate to remain in Rwanda amidst flashbacks of Mogadishu and fears of an even greater international uproar. Thus, Hutu Power leaders correctly predicted the action the international community would take when the Belgians pulled out all of their forces delivering a severe blow to Dallaire. However, Dallaire, horrified at the events unfolding around him, communicated to the UN that if it would supply him with a minimum of 5,000 troops and give him free reign to fight the perpetrators, he could end the slaughter.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, current military analysts studying the genocide today confirm his beliefs. Yet, on April 21st the UN responded not by supplying Dallaire with more troops but rather by cutting the UNAMIR force by 90% leaving Dallaire with a meager 270 soldiers.<sup>32</sup> The Security Council made this decision even though just two days earlier, on April 19th, the independent organization Human Rights Watch estimated that over 100,000 people had been killed in Rwanda and called on the Security Council to label the massacres as genocide.

Leaving only 270 peacekeeping soldiers in Rwanda when hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians had already been brutally murdered was the biggest and most shameful mistake the international community made in its response to the genocide.<sup>33</sup> The RPF, basically left to stop the genocide on its own, was rightfully infuriated. It felt that the international community had not only abandoned Rwanda but in the process had also exacerbated the situation. Tito Rutaremara, an RPF Executive Committee Member, believes that because of UNAMIR's presence in Rwanda, many Tutsis and moderate Hutus initially chose to not flee the country but rather to seek refuge in areas that were under UNAMIR control. When UNAMIR all but completely pulled out of the country, thousands of Rwandans were left vulnerable and unprotected against the vicious attacks of the genocidaires, or perpetrators of the genocide. Rutaremara states,

We would have been better off without the UN because all they did was provide false hope and demonstrate that the international community was not going to do anything to protect people.<sup>34</sup>

As UNAMIR was departing from the country, Rwandans laid in the streets to try to block the UNAMIR trucks from leaving while others threw their children into the trucks screaming, "Don't abandon us!" and "They are going to kill us if you leave!"<sup>35</sup> Yet it seemed that nothing would stop the international community from deserting Rwanda.

Today, many UN officials and leaders around the world will claim that they did not do more during the genocide because they did not know the extent of what was occurring in Rwanda. Many say that they believed the massacres were contained in Kigali, the capital city, and were unaware that the carnage had spread across the entire country. Yet this is just not feasible. As was previously stated, as early as April 19th the organization Human Rights Watch notified the Security Council that genocide was occurring. By April 21st the International Committee of the Red Cross claimed hundreds of thousands were dead. On April 27th the Pope recognized that genocide was occurring in Rwanda and on April 28th Oxfam came to the same conclusion.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, with so many different entities recognizing the genocide it is impossible to imagine that the UN and international leaders were unaware of the massacres. One U.S. State Department official even notes,

After two weeks (following the April 6 assassination of President Habyarimana) we knew that this was a systematic effort to exterminate Tutsi, this was a genocide. I was reluctant to draw such a conclusion before because we didn't know enough yet, and we didn't know enough of the details. We just knew that a hell-of-a-lot of people were being killed. By April 21, 22, 23, we were certain that this was genocide.<sup>37</sup>

Truthfully, the real reason why nobody chose to intervene in Rwanda was because the country lacked strategic importance. Anthony Lake, the U.S. National Security Advisor in 1994, states this clearly by saying,

Intervention just wasn't going to happen in Rwanda. It was a period of a lot of international threats, and Rwanda just didn't seem like it was that important compared to these.<sup>38</sup>

With the memory of Somalia still fresh in the minds of international leaders and a lack of any type of strategic importance in Rwanda, the international community chose to turn a blind eye to the genocide.

<sup>31</sup> Gourevitch, 150.

<sup>32</sup> Cohen, 89.

<sup>33</sup> PBS Frontline: Ghosts of Rwanda. "Timeline" <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ghosts/etc/crontext.html> (accessed March 20, 2009).

<sup>34</sup> Cohen, 55.

<sup>35</sup> Cohen, 89.

<sup>36</sup> Cohen, 134.

<sup>37</sup> Cohen, 134.

<sup>38</sup> Cohen, 60.

Since it was clear that military intervention was not an option for the international community, the next logical step would have been the use of diplomatic pressure, however, this type of involvement was also never utilized. The Clinton administration and other world leaders could have publicly named and condemned the masterminds behind the genocide, supported a coalition of willing African countries to intervene in Rwanda, or “jammed” or disrupted the transmission of the hate radio broadcasts.<sup>39</sup> Scholars who are presently studying the genocide agree that had forceful diplomacy been used, the killings may have not taken place on such a large scale. Had Hutu Power leaders received any kind of indication that the international community would not stand for the murder of hundreds of thousands of people, they may have been more wary and less vigorous with their campaign. In fact, it was not until July 15th, roughly 11 days after the genocide had already ended, that President Clinton ordered the freezing of Rwandan assets in the United States and the closing of the Rwandan embassy in Washington D.C.<sup>40</sup> President Clinton stated that the United States could not “...allow representatives of a regime that supports genocidal massacres on our soil.”<sup>41</sup> However, his administration had done exactly that throughout the 100 days during which the genocide was occurring.

In addition to using neither military nor diplomatic intervention techniques, a debate raged throughout the entirety of the genocide about whether or not the conflict should be labeled as a genocide. While hundreds of thousands of Rwandans were being slaughtered, the international community stood to the side bickering amongst themselves about whether or not it was really a genocide that was occurring. The problem the international community faced with calling the conflict a genocide was that if it were labeled as such then the world would be obligated to intervene. After WWII, as the extent of the atrocities the Nazis committed was beginning to be understood, world leaders participated in the Genocide Convention of 1948 in which they became legally bound to intervene if another genocide ever occurred. Since no one in the international community wanted to intervene in Rwanda, the wording used to describe the massacres was always chosen very carefully in order to avoid the term “genocide”.

On April 26, 1994, policymakers from every relevant U.S. government agency came together for the largest meeting on Rwanda to date to decide what should be done about the conflict. At the meeting the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) distributed a report called “Genocide in Partition” which clearly labeled the conflict as genocide and described the killings that were taking place in Rwanda. When the INR was presenting the report to the meeting, State Department lawyers stood up and interrupted their presentation telling the INR representatives that they were not allowed to call the conflict genocide.<sup>42</sup> This was not the only instance in which government officials were banned from using the word genocide. Indeed, it was not until about a month later on May 21st that the State Department finally agreed to use the watered down term “acts of genocide” to describe the conflict. This term implied that only some of the actions occurring in Rwanda fit with the Genocide Convention’s definition of genocide. To be sure, the Secretary of State was guaranteed that this term would not result in any legal commitment on the part of the United States to intervene.<sup>43</sup> The selfish refusal of the international community to label the massacres as genocide was shameful and proved that the world powers were more concerned about terminology than about ending the slaughter of Rwandans.

### *The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda*

After the genocide ended, the UN Security Council created the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) by resolution 955 on November 8, 1994. The ICTR’s website states,

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda was established for the prosecution of persons responsible for genocide and other serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in the territory of Rwanda between 1 January 1994 and 31 December 1994.<sup>44</sup>

The tribunal is located in Arusha, Tanzania and is still operating today. I had the chance to visit the Tribunal in Arusha and receive a tour, view a movie on the Tribunal’s history and accomplishments, and sit in on a briefing given by an ICTR official. Having this rare opportunity to travel to Tanzania and personally visit the ICTR gave me a unique insight into the Tribunal. While I was there I discovered two major points. First, the Tribunal seems to be rather under-funded and lacking in what I expected out of a UN facility. And second, the focus of the Tribunal was not what I had expected it to be.

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<sup>39</sup> Cohen, 147.

<sup>40</sup> Cohen, 148.

<sup>41</sup> Cohen, 148.

<sup>42</sup> Cohen, 135.

<sup>43</sup> Cohen, 139.

<sup>44</sup> International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. “General Information”. <http://69.94.11.53/ENGLISH/geninfo/index.htm> (accessed April 2, 2009).

The ICTR is housed in the Arusha International Conference Center. The Conference Center was a large building; however, it was not what I had envisioned I would be visiting. The library that we toured was extremely small, about the size of a typical grade school classroom here in the United States. It only had roughly six computers for lawyers and visiting law students to do research on. Also, the entire facility had a smell of mold and parts of the building were falling apart and run-down. Although the facility did not reach the standards I had expected, it is important to remember that expectations for the building maintenance may be very different by African standards.

Also, it is necessary to examine why it has taken so long for the ICTR to finish its mission and complete the trials of the masterminds behind the genocide. One major reason for this is that the Arusha International Conference Center was never meant to house an international tribunal on the scale of the ICTR. It lacked adequate courtrooms, translators, technology, and detention facilities. Thus, in large part due to under-funding, it took a great deal of time to transform the Conference Center into a facility worthy of the ICTR and capable of housing it. A second major reason for the amount of time it has taken to complete the trials is that the perpetrators of the genocide went into hiding immediately after the RPF captured Kigali. It is believed that they are hiding in refugee camps in various African countries. Receiving tips on where they are can be extremely difficult because many of them still hold the people they are living with in the refugee camps in a state of fear and blind loyalty.

Regardless of all of the difficulties the ICTR has faced, it also has had its fair share of accomplishments. To date, it has completed 33 cases in which 28 persons were convicted and five were acquitted.<sup>45</sup> Also, while sitting in on a briefing given by an information analyst at the ICTR, I was struck by the fact that he repeatedly emphasized the global precedents that the Tribunal has set. One of the most prominent of these precedents was that Jean Kambanda, the former Prime Minister of Rwanda, pleaded guilty to the charge of committing genocide, making him the first person to acknowledge guilt for this offense before an international criminal tribunal and marking the first instance in which a head of government was convicted of the crime of genocide.<sup>46</sup> The second major precedent the Tribunal set was with the 2003 “Media Case” which was the first judgment since the Nuremberg trials after WWII in which the role of the media was examined in relation to international crimes. The “Media Case” found Hassan Ngeze, editor of the newspaper *Kangura*, as well as Ferdinand Nahimana and Jean-Basco Barayagwiza, founders of the radio station RTLM, guilty of genocide and direct and public incitement to commit genocide, among other charges.<sup>47</sup>

In addition to setting global precedents, the ICTR has also set up a community outreach program in Rwanda that educates Rwandans about the goals and accomplishments of the ICTR. The principle center of the outreach program is located in Kigali where students and journalists often come in order to study the Tribunal. However, outside of the Kigali center, the ICTR also transmits information about its work through lectures, briefings, workshops, and films.<sup>48</sup> Although the outreach program is useful for educating groups about the tribunal, the question remains of whether the Rwandan people utilize the facilities or even want the outreach program in their country. While I was in Tanzania I spoke with a man who had lost several friends in the genocide. He claimed that his friends’ families and many other Rwandans would prefer that the past was left in the past and they wish that the Tribunal would finish its work so that the country could heal and move forward. Therefore, it must be remembered that perhaps not all Rwandans fully support the work of the ICTR.

Overall, the ICTR has both positive and negative aspects. While it is true that the ICTR has completed important work in convicting 28 of the masterminds behind the genocide and in setting groundbreaking precedents, the Tribunal faces ongoing difficulties in receiving the type of equipment and facilities it needs and also may lack the support of the Rwandan people. In the aftermath of the genocide, the creation of the ICTR shows that the international community cares about bringing justice to the engineers of the genocide. However, such problems as under funding and inadequate facilities also show that the international community could work harder to amend its mistakes and prove that it is truly remorseful for enabling the genocide to continue.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, the Rwandan genocide of 1994 was one of the most brutal events in modern history. Everything from the tactics the murderers used to kill their victims to the mass participation of thousands of Hutus caused the genocide to be an especially atrocious incident. Indeed, one of the most horrifying aspects of the genocide is the way the international community chose to respond to it. By pulling out all but 270 UNAMIR soldiers, the international

<sup>45</sup> <http://69.94.11.53/ENGLISH/geninfo/index.htm>

<sup>46</sup> International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. “Achievements of the ICTR” <http://69.94.11.53/ENGLISH/factsheets/achievements.htm> (accessed March 30, 2009).

<sup>47</sup> International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. “The Media Trial”. <http://69.94.11.53/ENGLISH/cases/Barayagwiza/CaseProfile/Cp281103.htm> (accessed March 30, 2009).

<sup>48</sup> <http://69.94.11.53/ENGLISH/factsheets/achievements.htm>



community physically abandoned Rwandans and left thousands vulnerable to the attack of the genocidaires. In addition to leaving thousands of Rwandans unprotected, through their nonuse of diplomatic pressure and refusal to call the conflict a genocide, the international community selfishly and shamefully turned a blind eye to the hundreds of thousands of people being brutally murdered. All things considered, in its reaction to the genocide during 1994 the international community failed the Rwandan people dismally.

After the killings finally ended, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) was established in Arusha, Tanzania to bring to justice the masterminds behind the genocide. The Tribunal has enjoyed much success both through the conviction of 28 people and also through the worldwide precedents it has set. However, the lack of funding has greatly diminished the Tribunal's ability to run the trials smoothly and efficiently. In addition, the question remains as to whether ordinary Rwandans support the mission of the ICTR or if they would rather lay the past to rest and allow their country to heal. Therefore, perhaps the success of the international community's response to the genocide after its conclusion is still unanswered. However, it is clear that the international community has made an effort to amend its mistakes and bring Rwandans closure.

All in all, the genocide of 1994 is something that will live in Rwandans' hearts forever. The scope of the effect the genocide had on the country will be felt for generations to come as Rwandans try to come to terms with the brutality that took place on their soil and begin to rebuild. What is clear is that after the Holocaust the world made a promise that something so inhumane and horrific would never be allowed to happen again. Yet, just over a decade ago the international community stood aside as another genocide unfolded. The promise of "never again" most likely rings flat in Rwandans' ears. However, it is a promise that must be defended.

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