

# Bloodbath in the Making

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Ten years ago, the world abandoned Rwanda's Tutsis to genocide. An estimated 800,000 people were murdered by their Hutu neighbours. Although a heroic Canadian general, Roméo Dallaire, requested reinforcements for the 2,500 United Nations peacekeepers in Rwanda and a mandate to stop the genocide, the UN Security Council instead voted to withdraw UN troops. We watched and washed our hands.

Today 800,000 Africans from Darfur, Sudan, have been driven from their homes by Arab militias, supported by Sudanese government air strikes, in the worst case of ethnic cleansing since Kosovo. About 700,000 are in camps inside Sudan that are closed to relief organizations and the press. More than 100,000 have fled across the desert border into Chad, where they are dying of hunger and thirst. A thousand people die daily.

Armed by the Sudanese government, the Arab *Janjaweed* militias murder, rape, and pillage African villages with impunity. Their leaders credit the "Arab race" with "civilization," and consider black Africans to be *abd* (male slaves) and *kahdim* (female slaves). In Tweila, North Darfur, on Feb. 27, according to the UN Darfur Task Force, the *Janjaweed* and Sudanese army murdered at least 200 people and gang-raped more than 200 girls and women, many in front of their fathers and husbands, who were then killed. The *Janjaweed* branded those they raped on their hands to mark them permanently so they would be shunned.

Genocidal massacres and mass rape are the tactics of ethnic cleansing. Their intent is to terrorize Africans such as the Fur, Massaleit, and Zaghawa into leaving Darfur, where an African kingdom and sultanate ruled for 2,000 years.

Genocide is the intentional destruction, in whole or in part, of a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. Ethnic cleansing is not quite genocide, because its intent is the expulsion, rather than physical destruction of a group. But genocidal massacres are a common tactic. The Arab militias of Darfur want to drive out black Africans because they want to confiscate their grazing lands, water resources and cattle.

Farther south, the Sudanese government wants to confiscate rich oil reserves under the lands of the Nuer, Dinka, Shilluk, Nuba and other black African groups. A 20-year civil war has driven thousands of Africans into refugee camps, which the Sudanese air force has regularly bombed. The Khartoum government has repeatedly cut off food aid. More than two million people have died.

A "peace process" mediated by the United States, Britain, Norway and Italy is hammering out an agreement to end the civil war in the south. Recently there was much exultation when the Sudanese government and southern rebel leaders agreed to divide up the oil revenues. But you can be sure no African peasants will ever see a penny of the money. You can also be sure that in five years, when the southerners are to decide on self-determination, the northern Arabs won't let them.

Many governments and human-rights groups now call for another peace process. They also call for another UN relief program for the refugees and displaced persons. Both are needed. But neither will solve the fundamental problem, which is the genocidal nature of the government in Khartoum. Ethnic cleansings in Sudan will end only when President Omar al-Bashir's government is overthrown.

Diplomats always prefer "peace processes." But in Arusha, Tanzania, in 1993-94, the "peace process" was a sideshow that distracted attention from preparations for genocide in Rwanda. In Sudan, as in Rwanda, diplomats see their job as "conflict resolution." Genocide isn't conflict; it's one-sided mass murder. Jews had no conflict with Nazis. Armenians posed no threat to Turks. Tutsis did not advocate mass murder of Rwandan Hutus. Conflict resolution isn't genocide prevention.

The Darfur ethnic cleansing has already spilled over the Chad border. As a threat to international peace, it should be on the agenda of the UN Security Council. But the UN will be paralyzed by Arab League and Non-Aligned Movement solidarity, and Canada and the European Union won't act without UN authorization. The U.S. and Britain have more than they can handle in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Why, 10 years after Rwanda, has the world reacted so slowly to ethnic cleansing in Darfur?

Racism is one reason. African lives still are not seen to equal the value of the lives of Kosovars and other white people, who are inside our circle of moral concern.

National sovereignty is another. The norm of international law is still against intervention, even when a government has forfeited its own claim to legitimacy by committing genocide or ethnic cleansing against its own people.

Also, the world's leaders know they can kill with impunity. The International Criminal Court does not have universal jurisdiction unless a situation is referred to it by the UN Security Council. The United States will prevent that. Sudan has not ratified the ICC treaty, so is not subject to it.

Finally there is our indifference. We still don't care enough to demand that our political leaders send our sons and daughters to prevent and stop genocides.

Two years ago, Genocide Watch and the International Campaign to End Genocide called for the appointment of a UN Secretary-General's special adviser for genocide prevention, to warn the UN Security Council of incipient genocide and ethnic cleansing. We hope Kofi Annan will announce the creation of such a position on April 7, the anniversary of the beginning of the Rwandan genocide.

We need military forces that can intervene with heavy infantry to prevent or stop genocides when they begin. Canada has led the way in preparing its armed forces for international peacekeeping. We are hopeful about the European Union's creation of a Rapid Response Force, and the EU deployment to the Eastern Congo. The African Union's announcement that it will create a similar force is a sign that "never again" may become more than an empty slogan.

We need a world movement to prevent genocide and ethnic cleansing, an effort as great as the anti-slavery movement. Ultimately, preventing genocide and ethnic cleansing means creating the political will in our leaders to lead. We must tell them that never again will we believe their excuses that they didn't know. Never again will we excuse their failure to act. Never again will we forget that we are all members of the same race, the human race.

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