

# When will Samantha Power speak up?



Elihu D. Richter

As the head of the new US Mass Atrocities Prevention Board, Samantha Power has an opportunity to show the world that America is serious about preventing genocide, namely by holding Iran's leaders accountable for inciting genocide against the Jews.

But I have little reason to be optimistic, giving my own experience with Power.

Thus far, she and the entire foreign policy elite of the United States, Europe and the United Nations have been largely silent as Iran's leaders have waged a verbal campaign of dehumanization, delegitimization, disinformation, denial of past genocide and intimidation.

This is not empty talk, but a harbinger of genocidal terror – coming as it does from a nation that routinely suppresses human rights, subjects minorities to extra-judicial executions, supports terror and, most ominously, seeks nuclear weapons.

While Iran is an epicenter of jihadist anti-Semitic genocidal incitement, hate language pervades the entire Islamic world today and threatens non-Muslim groups as well as Muslim moderates. It is used to mobilize followers and desensitize or intimidate bystanders. Schools, mosques, summer camps and TV programs teach hate, infecting the next generation.



Samantha Power

So why has Power – who so aggressively investigated the role of incitement in the Rwandan genocide – turned a deaf ear to the Mideast?

I was greatly influenced by Power's book, "A Problem From Hell: America and the Age of Genocide," particularly her account of Raphael Lemkin, who escaped the Nazis in Poland and later coined the term, "genocide." It amazed me how well a young journalist of Irish Catholic background could capture Lemkin's passion and obsession.

In "A Problem out of Hell," Power also wrote eloquently about the precedent-setting trials of the International Criminal Court Tribunal- Rwanda. She recounted how journalists and entertainers at Rwanda's most influential radio station used hate language to incite Hutu terror squads to butcher Tutsis and moderate Hutus, killing some 800,000 in three to four months. Nearly all the radio hatemongers were convicted of incitement and imprisoned, even if they did not participate in the killing.

Rwanda served as a reminder that *words kill*. It was a lesson we previously learned at the Nuremberg Trials, where Julius Streicher, the editor of the viciously anti-Semitic newspaper *Der Sturmer*, was executed for incitement. In February 2006, the International Association of Genocide Scholars endorsed a resolution calling on the world to indict Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad for incitement to genocide, Holocaust denial, human rights abuses and pursuit of nuclear weapons. The US House of Representatives passed its own resolution backing that of the association.

In July 2007, I wrote Power – then a professor at Harvard – asking her to lobby the US government to take executive action. I followed up by calling her research assistant.

Power never answered.

At the time, then-Senator Joseph Biden – chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations committee – personally blocked introduction of the House resolution in the Senate, according to the *Jerusalem Post*. As Barack Obama marched to the White House, the soon-to-be victorious Democrats embraced "engagement with Iran" – which in retrospect bore disturbing parallels to Neville Chamberlain's appeasement of Hitler.

To date, despite economic sanctions, Iran continues to incite genocide with its propaganda, invite Armageddon with its nuclear program, and promote terror with its support of Hezbollah and Syria's suppression of rebels.

I call upon Power to push for a doctrine of Zero Tolerance for Incitement. That means:

- Applying existing international laws to deter and punish hate language and incitement by Iran, Hezbollah, Hamas and all other powers in the region;
- Using the lever of US aid to set tough ground rules against incitement for the Islamist regimes who have taken over in Tunisia and Egypt, as well as in Pakistan;
- Using the lever of US aid to stop Palestinian incitement, such as President Mahmoud Abbas' glorification of terrorists who intentionally kill civilians; and
- Mobilizing international pressure to protect and guarantee the human rights of all threatened minorities, including

Copts in post-revolution Egypt; Armenians, Christians and Assyrians in Turkey and Iraq; Baha'i and Kurds in Iran; and Christians and Jews in territory under the control of the Palestinian Authority.

If Power's Prevention Board is to live up to its name, it must respond to the warning signs of atrocities, not sit back until the slaughter begins.

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