



Attention:
Foreign
Affairs L.A.

Armenian National Committee of America

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

To: Foreign Affairs Legislative Assistant
From: Aram S. Hamparian, Executive Director
Date: January 31, 2005

Re: Ending the Cycle of Genocide

Armenian Americans - the children and grandchildren of genocide survivors - are painfully aware of the terrible price of the world's indifference in the face of the systematic destruction and deliberate mass slaughters that continue to plague our world.

As you know, the denial of the Armenian Genocide by the Turkish government set the stage for a century marked by a horrific cycle of genocide. To this day, Turkey's efforts to cover-up this atrocity make the world a more dangerous place - emboldening those in Sudan and elsewhere with the knowledge that their crimes can be committed with impunity. Even as we take action today to end the killing in Darfur, we must commit to finally bringing an end to the longest campaign of genocide denial in history - the shameful campaign by the Turkish government to erase the murder of one and a half million Armenians.

In this regard, I would like to bring two matters to your attention. The first is the attached piece, a highly moving editorial in today's *Detroit Free Press* by Salih Booker, the dynamic Executive Director of Africa Action. The second is an upcoming briefing at the Woodrow Wilson Center, details of which are provided below:

Briefing: The Wilson Center's Africa Program and the Conflict Prevention Project are jointly hosting a briefing by John Prendergast, Special Advisor to the President of the International Crisis Group, on "Darfur, Southern Sudan and Northern Uganda: The Quest for a Comprehensive Peace."

The program will take place on Monday, February 7, 2005, 2:00 pm. - 3:30 p.m. in the 6th Floor Auditorium of the Ronald Reagan Building, One Woodrow Wilson Plaza, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW. To RSVP, contact Africa Program Assistant Mike Jobbins at africa@wwic.si.edu

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Intervention could help avoid another ‘Hotel Rwanda’

By SALIH BOOKER -- *January 31, 2005*

The Western world, the white world, will not intervene to stop genocide in Africa. That is one of the central messages of the recently released and critically acclaimed film “Hotel Rwanda.” It is a message hard to refute in the case of Rwanda, 10 years ago, and again today in the case of Darfur, Sudan.

This film, which ought to be required viewing for everyone interested in America’s role in the world, is primarily about a good Samaritan in a time of genocide. The protagonist, Paul Rusesabagina, played brilliantly by the Oscar-nominated Don Cheadle, asks not, “If I stop and help this man, what will become of me?” but rather, “If I do not stop and help this man, what will become of him?”

The film’s focus is one ordinary man who demonstrates what can be done to save hundreds of souls when you assume that is your most basic duty to your fellow human beings. But the larger message is of the tragedy of the world’s failure to protect Rwandans in their hour of need.

In only 100 days, 800,000 to 1 million people were killed in Rwanda while the world watched.

At the time of the genocide a decade ago, the U.S. government refused to call it by its name, lest that oblige Washington to do something about it.

Far from advocating for additional peacekeepers, the United States pressed the United Nations to withdraw its forces - the last thin line against the escalating slaughter - even as the genocide unfolded, but only after all Americans and other Westerners were safely evacuated.

The United States did nothing as extremists on radio incited the killings. The Clinton administration and Congress rationalized that decision as complying with international telecommunications law. The U.S. government also knew who was leading the genocide and even spoke to them, but failed to act against them.

Alone among the principal nations and international organizations involved, the United States has refused to hold any internal investigations of its failure to act to stop genocide in Rwanda. (President Clinton has, however, apologized for sitting on his hands.)

Fast-forward one decade. In Sudan, 400,000 people have been murdered in Darfur over the last two years. The Sudanese government unleashed this genocide against civilians in Darfur as a counterinsurgency strategy to quash a rebellion in that politically important region.

But the genocide in Sudan is different from that in Rwanda. It has unfolded in slow motion, making it an even stronger indictment against the international community that regularly intones the words “never again,” including at last April’s 10th anniversary commemorations in Rwanda. The community is proving to be tardy in living up to that promise.

Also, due in part to public pressure, the U.S. government was forced this time to acknowledge that genocide was occurring in Sudan and that the Khartoum government was responsible.

And yet, in the same testimony last September to Congress declaring the finding of genocide in Darfur, Secretary of State Colin Powell stated - incredibly - that no further action was warranted on the part of the U.S.

Apparently, the president has agreed. Despite early signs of hope, the administration’s overall inaction in the face of the atrocities is mind-boggling.

Genocide is a crime against humanity requiring an urgent international response. But states will not act unless their citizens demand it.

We must demand leadership from the U.S. government to do what is necessary to gain a UN Security Council resolution authorizing a multinational force - based on a small African Union force already in Sudan - to intervene with the mandate to protect civilians and the authority to enforce a cease-fire.

After watching “Hotel Rwanda” how can we fail humanity so soon and again in Africa?