Acknowledging Failure

After 1994, the international community, including the United Nations, failed to react to the signs of the genocide in Rwanda. The United Nations Force Commander in Rwanda, Mr. Romeo Dallaire, repeatedly denounced the situation in early 1994, warning that the killing was genocide. However, the UN Security Council did not increase the size of the UN mission in Rwanda, the UN Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR), to prevent the genocide. The failure of the international community to prevent the genocide was a collective failure.

Too Little, Too Late

On 11 January 1994, UNAMIR Commander Dallaire was authorized to seize weapons from extremist militia preparing for mass killings in the territory of Rwanda. However, Dallaire was denied permission to seize the weapons, as such action was considered outside the force's mandate. Dallaire stated his intention to seize the weapons, but was left with only 354 troops.

War Breaks Out

In the early 1990s, Tutsis sought to return to Rwanda and were prevented from doing so. However, in early 1994, the Tutsi-led Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) began a military campaign against the Hutu government. The eruption of the genocide led to a power struggle within the government, and from then on the Tutsi population became the focus of the killing.

Genocide

In 1994, the United Nations Security Council established the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) in Arusha, Tanzania, to try those responsible for genocide, war crimes, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in the territory of Rwanda. Trials began in January 1997. The Tribunal has convicted twenty-eight people and acquitted five. Twenty-seven people are currently on trial and eight are awaiting the start of their cases.

Abandoned

Although the Rwandan genocide took many people by surprise, there had been enough warning signs that genocide was imminent. A history of discrimination, violence, and massacres preceded and foreshadowed the events of 1994.

A History of Discrimination

Rwanda's three ethnic groups, the majority Hutu, minority Tutsi and smaller Twa population shared a common language, religion, and culture. The country was ruled by a predominantly Tutsi monarchy until colonized by Germany in 1896. Belgium took control in 1916, imposed upon the highly developed monarchy and unwilling to accept it as African in origin, colonists and early explorers called the Tutsis a superior "Black Aryan" race. Tutsis were given privileged positions in the colonial administration. Hutus were considered second-class "Bantu Negroes" and the Twa "Pygmies".

In 1932, Belgium introduced identity cards stating the ethnicity of the bearer. Tutsis continued to rule in 1957 when the Catholic Church and the colonial authorities helped Hutu elites take power. The rebellion was violent, and thousands died.

In 1942, Général Kayibanda became the first elected Hutu president. His regime obtained the identity cards. Kayibanda was overthrown by army officer Juvenal Habyarimana in 1973. Under Habyarimana, Tutsi were systematically discriminated against and subjected to sporadic violence.

Justice for the Victims

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Three Generations

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