



GPN GENOCIDE PREVENTION NOW

This project was made possible in part by a grant from Carnegie Corporation of New York. The contents of this blog are the responsibility of the Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide in Jerusalem.

A Holocaust and Genocide Review on the Internet for all people
taking the side of protecting all human life
www.genocidepreventionnow.org

Executive Director: Prof. Israel W. Charny, Ph.D. Director of WORLD GENOCIDE SITUATION ROOM: Prof. Eilihu D. Richter, M.D., M.P.H.
Director of HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE REVIEW: Marc I Sherman, M.L.S.

52 Rabbis Call for Action to End Killing in Congo -- 54 million Dead Since 1988

Reprinted with Permission

Following the commemoration of Yom HaShoah, the Jewish annual commemoration of the Holocaust, 52 Rabbis in the UK issued a public statement urging Prime Minister Brown and the then two leaders of the opposition, Nick Clegg and David Cameron, to pledge to make saving the Congo an absolute priority for the next Parliament.

The statement, drafted by Rabbi David Mitchell of Radlett & Bushley Reform Synagogue and Vava Tampa, director of Save the Congo, was delivered to Prime Minister Brown and the two leaders of opposition: Mr. Clegg and Mr. Cameron, on Tuesday, April 20th by Paul Rusesabagina - the real life hero of the acclaimed film, *Hotel Rwanda*.

The Democratic Republic of Congo, a country the size of Western Europe with a population of approximately 60 million, is one of the most fragile states in the world. Despite its abundance in natural resources. Its torrid history is marred by human tragedy, spanning back to its horrific colonisation by King Leopold II of Belgium, through to a brutal dictatorship under Mobuto Sese Seko, and since 1998 by a succession of invasions by Rwandan and Ugandan troops fighting to gain control of Congo's easily appropriable and highly valuable natural resources destined for sale in London, New York and Paris.

In April 2007, the International Rescue Committee's pivotal study placed the death toll in the DR Congo since 1998 at 5.4 million¹. This horrific figure continues to rise at a rate of 45,000 mortalities a month. It is now three years since the study in 2007 and the additional consequences of disease and malnutrition have resulted in a staggering rise in the death toll to at least seven million fatalities, not to mention the millions of refugees.

The text of the statement by the rabbis is the following:

Dear Prime Minister Brown, Mr. Cameron and Mr. Clegg,

The people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo) have, for over eleven years, endured the evils of violence, war crimes, corruption, humanitarian crisis, looting, and rape on a scale that defies comprehension.

In April 2007, the International Rescue Committee's pivotal study placed the death toll in the DR Congo since 1998 at 5.4 million. This horrific figure continues to rise at a rate of 45,000 mortalities a month. It is now three years since the study in 2007 and the additional consequences of disease and malnutrition have resulted in a staggering rise in the death toll to at least seven million fatalities, not to mention the millions of refugees.

What these shocking figures cannot convey is the scale of ongoing rape, torture and mutilation occurring throughout the DR Congo. As recently as February, fifteen women were abducted and raped by armed assailants—five were brutally tortured and then beheaded, three survived and were taken to Panzi Hospital in Bukavu for emergency medical care. The remaining seven are still missing, presumed dead. The Human Rights organization Genocide Watch lists DR Congo at the top of its 2010 list of countries facing ongoing massacres.²

There is still no end in sight to the atrocities or to this humanitarian crisis. Moreover, political stability and peace within the DR Congo are critically important not just for the citizens of the DR Congo, but for all those who live within the African Great Lakes region. *Yet, to the majority of the world, the plight of the people of the DR Congo remains invisible* (italics by GPN).

We have just marked Yom HaShoah, the Jewish annual commemoration of the Holocaust. When we recently discovered the suffering and scale of the atrocities in the DR Congo, we cannot but recall our own six million innocent victims of Nazi Genocide. The “hear nothing, see nothing and do nothing” approach the world community has thus far adopted, regarding this crisis in the DR Congo, fails to fulfill the promise to “NEVER AGAIN!” stand idly by while innocent human beings are slaughtered. It denies justice to the victims and questions our very commitment to humanity. As Rabbis we cannot ignore the call of our tradition: “whoever destroys a soul, it is considered as if he destroyed an entire world. And whoever saves a life, it is considered as if he saved an entire world.” (Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 37a).

Accordingly, we the undersigned, Rabbis, united in this statement, appeal to you on behalf of all peoples of the DR Congo. We have a responsibility to speak for those who cannot, so we urge you to do likewise. As a significant contributor to the UN and a permanent member of the UN Security Council as well as a core member of the European Union, British Commonwealth and the G20, the UK could and should play a more central role in mobilizing world opinion to address the root causes of this conflict.

We are therefore asking you and your party to pledge an unwavering resolve to make Saving the Congo an absolute priority for the next Parliament.

We recognize that there are, sadly, numerous humanitarian crises and atrocities around the world, all of which require urgent attention. Yet the war and humanitarian crisis overwhelming the DR Congo are on a scale that can no longer remain ignored. Now is the time for action, now is the time for leadership. We hope that you will heed the call.

Yours in the name of peace

(Signatures of Rabbis)

Note to Readers: Save the Congo receives no money from any governments or corporations. It is staffed by a global team based in London and Sydney, and it is registered in England and Wales: Company No. 06961720. The organization, www.savethecongo.co.uk is concerned with the genocide taking place in the Congo. The founding director Vava Tampa, a student in London, and a native of the Congo, is currently reading History and Politics at Queen Mary, University of London. His interests include Africa, human rights, HIV epidemic and sustainable development.

Source:

Tampa, Vava (May 6, 2010). Save the Congo, April 29, 2010, Excerpt from Press Release. 52 Rabbis Call for Actions to End the Killing in the Congo.

http://savethecongo.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=134:save-the-congo&catid=112:speech-a-statement&Itemid=78

The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), May 7, 2010.

<http://www.appggreatlakes.org/index.php/appg-reports-mainmenu-35/articles-mainmenu-36/148-52-rabbis-call-for-actions-to-end-the-killing-in-the-congo>

References

¹ Democratic Republic of Congo: Our Work
http://www.christianaid.org.uk/whatwedo/africa/dr_congo.aspx

² Genocide Watch
<http://www.genocidewatch.org/aboutgenocide/countriesatrisk2010.html>

³ International Rescue Committee: Mortality in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: An Ongoing Crisis. Burnet Research Institute. The International Rescue Committee responds to the world's worst humanitarian crises and helps people to survive and rebuild their lives. Founded in 1933 at the request of Albert Einstein, the IRC offers lifesaving care and life-changing assistance to refugees forced to flee from war or

disaster. At work today in over 40 countries and in 22 U.S. cities, the IRC restores safety, dignity and hope to millions who are uprooted and struggling to endure.