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Ahmadinejad - incitement deserves indictment

By R. BLUM, G. STANTON, E. RICHTER AND I. CHARNY

German Chancellor Angela Merkel was the first world leader to recognize the connection between Iran's uranium enrichment, its testing of long distance missiles, and the genocidal statements of its president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. A day after declaring that Israel "should be wiped off the map" on October 25, he incited students to scream "death to Israel," at a government-sponsored conference called the "World without Zionism."

Chancellor Merkel declared: "A president that questions Israel's right to exist [and] denies the Holocaust, cannot expect to receive any tolerance from Germany. We have learned our history." Will Chancellor Merkel's warnings of the parallels between Iran's actions today and Nazi Germany's first steps towards genocide in the 1930's prod the world into effective deterrent action? The International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS) has passed a resolution noting that Iran's actions, including Ahmadinejad statements, are early warning signs of genocide. These signs include open expressions of an exclusionary ideology characterized by hate speech, an authoritarian government that represses dissent, the organization of fanatical militias, such as the Revolutionary Guards, and a sustained record of support for terror attacks against Jews around the world.

Most recently, Ahmadinejad added to the list the denial of a past genocide, the Holocaust. Indifference to incitement and inaction by the outside world, most notably the United Nations itself, are other warning signs - as we have seen in the Armenian Genocide, the Holocaust, Bosnia, Kosovo, Rwanda, Darfur and elsewhere in the world.

The development of a covert nuclear weapons program and long-range missiles by a state whose leader declares genocidal intent states the case for urgent deterrent actions. As we address the Iranian threat, it is helpful to recall that genocide was the most deadly crime against humanity in the 20th century, resulting in some 250 million preventable deaths: more than from all wars combined.

Historians have established that governmental incitement and use of hate language is a recognized predictor, initiator, promoter and catalyst of genocide. The direct and public

incitements to genocide by Iran's President are not only openly stated declarations of aggressive intent, but are in violation of Art. 2 (4) of the UN Charter, of the Genocide Convention, and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Articles 6 and 25 (3)(e).

President Ahmadinejad's attempted "clarification" that he merely advocates the "transfer" of Jews in Israel to German and Austrian provinces is itself advocacy of forced deportation, another crime against humanity, and is contradicted by his own actions and long-term Iranian policy, including terror attacks on Jews outside Israel, such as the bombing of a synagogue in Buenos Aires.

Iran could soon be an independent nuclear power, possessing advanced missile delivery systems. Even before Oct 25 Iran has never renounced its aggressive and genocidal aims against the Jews of the State of Israel and elsewhere.

The unprecedented threat of nuclear genocide necessitates an urgent response because, aside from the clear warning signs we have indicated, an actual apocalyptic nuclear attack could occur without further warning sufficient to engage in preventative action. Israel is a small country that can be reached within minutes by Iranian ballistic missiles. It is densely populated, and home to the largest number of Holocaust survivors in the world. Time is of the essence and delay could be catastrophic.

THE ETHICAL principle that needs to guide international action to prevent all genocidal threats is that human life is the most fundamental human right, because without life there are no other human rights. The international obligation to protect human life and well-being overrides the sovereignty claims of any government whose actions demonstrate genocidal intent.

Because the dangers of inaction could be catastrophic, we repeat the calls of Genocide Watch, the Hebrew University Genocide and Violence Prevention Program's petition, and the International Association for Genocide Scholars call for the application of the Precautionary Principle, a powerful tool for decision making in public health, for prevention of this and all other genocidal threats. This principle states that when there is uncertainty concerning the risk from a situation with potentially catastrophic effects upon human health and safety, the risks of inaction far outweigh those of preventive action.

The Precautionary Principle - which British Foreign Minister Jack Straw has already applied to this case - shifts the burden of proof from those warning of a risk of catastrophic event to those denying this risk. Preventive action, of course, means the obligatory imposition of effective sanctions to prevent Iranian development of nuclear weapons, and includes immediate and continuous IAEA inspections of all Iranian nuclear facilities, as well as confiscation of all technology, equipment, and nuclear material that could be used by Iran to manufacture nuclear weapons.

Because the obligation to protect life and safety overrides state sovereignty, Iran's genocidal declarations and actions undermine its claims to responsibly utilize its nuclear material for peaceful means.

All this, however, is insufficient. Historians have recognized that genocide results from the conscious choices of elites and occurs when there is indifference of outsiders to early warning signs, particularly hate language that serves to catalyze genocidal actions.

Accordingly we propose that the UN Security Council follow the landmark precedent of its referral of Sudanese leaders to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and refer Mr. Ahmadinejad, to the ICC for indictment for incitement to commit genocide.

Those convicted for incitement to commit genocide by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and sentenced to prison terms up to life imprisonment included Rwanda's former prime minister, a historian, a newspaper editor, a minister of information, and a journalist. We insist that the specific perpetrator must be stopped, and reject economic sanctions which would target the Iranian people collectively. Iran has a glorious past and culture, which this president definitely does not represent.

It is time for the UN to go from commemorating past genocides, such as the Holocaust and Rwanda, to stopping current genocides such as is now raging in Darfur Sudan, and deterring and preventing future ones. We call upon Juan Mendez, Special Advisor to the Secretary-General of the UN on Genocide Prevention, to establish a Genocide Prevention Network based on models for the surveillance of early warning signs of reportable epidemic disease.

Such a network should monitor the production and dissemination of all internationally distributed media and internet hate language relating to threatened 'world minority' populations, which include Israel and the global Jewish community.

Holocaust, genocide, and hate group experts should set up this network.

The Stockholm International Forum on the Prevention of Genocide of January 28, 2004 declared "the responsibility to protect groups identified as potential victims of genocide." We call upon the UN, the European Union, their member states and NGOs to exercise this responsibility by fostering the development and application of a code of ethics and standards for law, diplomacy, finance and the media that would outlaw incitement to hate, harm or exclusion of 'world minority' communities, including the State of Israel, Israelis, or Jews across the globe.

We suggest that indicting President Ahmadinejad for incitement to commit genocide would send a clear non-violent message to Iran's authoritarian leaders to back down from pursuing a genocidal ideology. It would be a major step towards deterring others planning future Bosnias, Kosovos, Rwandas and Darfurs. Chancellor Merkel has reminded us of the consequences of the world's ineffectual response to Hitler in the 1930's.

The world now has to choose between indifference and deterrence, not only to "save Israel," but to save itself.

Rony Blum is co-founder of the Genocide & Violence Prevention Program, Center for Injury Prevention, Hebrew University-Hadassah School of Public Health and Community Medicine, Jerusalem. Gregory H. Stanton is president of Genocide Watch, VP of the International Association of Genocide Scholars and James Farmer Professor of Human Rights at Mary Washington University. Elihu D. Richter, is director, Center for Injury Prevention, Hebrew University-Hadassah School of Public Health and Community Medicine, Jerusalem. Israel Charny is president of the International Association of Genocide Scholars, editor of the Encyclopedia of Genocide, and executive director of the Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide, Jerusalem.