

The Rwanda Forum, Imperial War Museum, London, Saturday 27th March 2004

Summing up – Dr. Greg Stanton

How can one summarise a conference like this?

Ten years and eleven days ago, the world abandoned Rwanda. Ten thousand people died, murdered by their neighbours. We watched and passed by on the other side. We've heard today how the genocide unfolded over Rwanda like a shroud. We've heard that our media's eyes were blind and our souls' ears were deaf to the victims' cries. We've heard the anguish of the survivors. We've tried to count the cost of our indifference. We've heard how the great powers on the United Nations Security Council ignored the pleas of Ambassador Gambare of Nigeria and Ambassador Kovanda of the Czech Republic and withdrew 2500 UN peacekeepers while over 1000 heavily armed European forces arrived within a few days, but only to airlift Europeans out of Rwanda.

But the Rwanda genocide, committed in the darkness of the moonless night, in the ebb tide of our compassion, was also a watershed for international justice. From it flowed the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and at high tide the nations of the world finally created the International Criminal Court envisioned by the framers of the Genocide Convention in 1948. The Canadian government's International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty has redefined the responsibility to protect human rights. The European Union and the African Union have declared their intent to establish rapid response forces to intervene and stop genocide and there's a strong current for democracy that's running around the world.

We have heard today that the United Nations' Secretary General has proposed the appointment of a UN special advisor for genocide prevention. The question we should ask is: can genocide be prevented? And I think the answer is that genocide is caused by human will and it can be prevented by human will.

Ultimately, preventing genocide means creating the political will in our leaders to lead. We must tell them that never again will we believe them when they say that they didn't know. Never again will we excuse them when they fail to act. Never again will we, all humans, all members of the same race, the human race, never again will we let the apocalyptic scourge of genocide cover the earth with human blood.

Never again.