

Scholars discuss impact of Genocide denial
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Ghananian officers at Kigali Memorial Centre yesterday. The New Times / Timothy Kisambira.

Well-known deniers of the Genocide against the Tutsi have resources at their disposal provided by American and European institutions to print false material with the aim of tainting the victims of the Genocide and glorifying its perpetrators.

This was disclosed yesterday during a symposium at the Kigali Genocide Memorial. The two-day lecture attracted prominent historians, among them, Professors Deborah Lipstadt, Peter Balakian, Donald E. Miller, scholars as well as government officials.

“Universities usually fact-check with several reviewers and editors before they publish books, but sometimes you wonder how books on genocide denial end up being published. These books only serve to tell third parties that ‘there is another side of the story’ and thus are a form of intellectual moral degradation that pollute people’s minds,” said Deborah Lipstadt, a Professor of Jewish and Holocaust Studies at the Emory University, in the United States.

Lipstadt is popular for her book “Denying the Holocaust” for which she was sued for libel in September, 1996 by a self-proclaimed Holocaust denier, David Irving, a case she later won.

“Denial of genocide whether the one against the Tutsi, Armenians or that of the Nazi against the Jews is not an act of historical reinterpretations; rather, the deniers sow confusion by appearing to be engaged in genuine scholarly effort. The abundance of documents and testimonies that confirm the Genocide are dismissed as contrived, coerced or forgeries and falsehoods,” she added.

Her words were echoed by Peter Balakian, a Professor of Humanities at the Colgate University in New York, U.S.A.

“Denial of Genocide is designed to reshape history in order to demonise the victims and rehabilitate the perpetrators. Denial is the final stage of genocide where the perpetrators seek to destroy remembrance of their crimes,” Balakian said.

“Where scholars deny genocide in the face of decisive evidence that it has occurred, they contribute to a false consciousness that can have the direst reverberations.”

In his keynote address, titled “When Racial Hatred Is Fashionable”, Rwandan author, Tom Ndahiro, criticised Western universities, in particular, the Wisconsin University, which he said helped publish at least two translated versions of books on denial against the Genocide against the Tutsi.

Ndahiro, who is currently writing a book titled “Friends of Evil”, said: “Some Western publishers believe that racial hatred is fashionable and, therefore, pay no heed to Genocide deniers who use their resources to print books that seek to “poison the minds of unsuspecting population.”