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The Path to genocide

Failure to prevent...

The ten commandments of the Bahutu

1. Bahutu must know that the Tutsi will, whenever they may be, be using the Tutsi as their enemy. In consequence, any Bahutu who does the following is a traitor:
 - Approves a Tutsi message
 - Approves a Tutsi assembly or department
2. All Bahutu must know that our Bahutuhutid daughters are their enemy and their sole responsibility is their work of women, spouse and mother. Any Bahutu not more beautiful, good and energetic than their mother.
3. Bahutuhutid, be diligent and bid for your husband's, brother's and sister's best interest.
4. All Bahutu must know that all Tutsis are dishonest in business. Their only goal is to exploit Bahutu's inferiority in consequence, any Bahutu who does the following is a traitor:
 - Whether makes alliance with the Bahutu in business
 - Whether contracts his services in such manner as Bahutu's company
 - Whether grants money or services to Bahutu
 - Whether grants favours to Bahutu in business (granting of money, money, bank notes, building permit, public tender, etc.)
5. The Bahutu must know that the Tutsi is a parasite.
6. The Bahutu must know that the Tutsi is a parasite.
7. The Bahutu must know that the Tutsi is a parasite.
8. The Bahutu must know that the Tutsi is a parasite.
9. The Bahutu must know that the Tutsi is a parasite.
10. The Bahutu must know that the Tutsi is a parasite.

Warning Signs

Genocide never happens by chance. It takes time to plan and organize. The warning signs are always there. In Rwanda, these were not acted upon effectively. World leaders ignored detailed warnings from UN peacekeepers on the ground that mass killings were imminent.

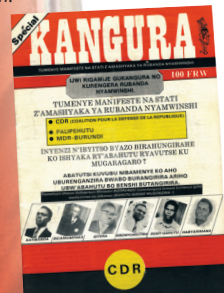
Particularly in its early days, many journalists dismissed the Rwandan genocide simply as 'fighting between rival tribal factions'. If genocide is misread and misreported by civil society and journalists, that can contribute to a lack of appropriate action by world leaders.

Minority groups are often at increased risk during times of economic crisis, political instability or war.

Competition over resources, along with a history of tension between minorities and the majority, can also heighten the danger.

These conditions can foster the growth of a set of ideas about the 'superiority' of the majority group and hatred for the minority, who are seen as a threat.

This is called an ideology of exclusion.



Background picture: Jean Kambanda, Rwanda's Prime Minister during the genocide, spurs the Adlers to action during a public rally. On 4 September 1998, he became the first former head of government to be convicted for the crime of genocide and public incitement to genocide. Source: Rwanda Television

Exclusion

Religion can be misused to reinforce belief in a majority group's superiority over a minority group. In Rwanda, for example, extreme groups used religious symbolism to exclude Tutsis. The 'Hutu Ten Commandments' urged the Hutus to separate themselves from the Tutsis. Extremists can easily use such discriminatory ideology to typify ALL members of the target group as sub-human – men, women and children – and to incite their extermination.

Excluded communities are often barred from politics and have limited access to employment or public services. Crimes against them may go unpunished. Their citizenship may be denied. They may be subjected to forced labour. As exclusion deepens, so does the risk of ethnic cleansing or genocide.



"I myself, eminent in history [the tough fighter] let go? We are coming to live in peace with those from whom we have robbed everything" Kungura, July 1993. Signed Paul Kagame leading the RPF over the coffee of Hutus. "I myself, eminent in history" was used by Hutu militants to denigrate the Tutsis. "I am sick doctor! What is your sickness?" "The Tutsi... Tutsi" Kungura, August 1993. Signed Paul Kagame leading the RPF over the coffee of Hutus. "I myself, eminent in history" was used by Hutu militants to denigrate the Tutsis. Caption published in Le Courrier du Peuple in March 1993.

The Role of Government

Genocide is almost always planned and masterminded by small groups with authoritarian or dictatorial powers, but in most cases is carried out with the involvement of the population at large. Leaders often allege that the targeted group is a threat to the rest of the community in order to gain support from the public. Democratic governments can give way to genocidal dictatorship if authoritarian leaders take over government institutions and use them to divide citizens along ethnic, racial or religious lines.

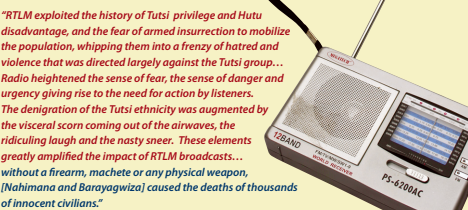
Propaganda

Genocide cannot take place without society's acceptance. Genocidal leaders often use propaganda to gain that acceptance. Propaganda stereotypes and dehumanizes members of the targeted group and legitimizes hate.

By reducing the humanity of the target group, extremists make it easier for society to accept mass killings. The rest of the community can even see such a campaign as self-defence against a 'vile' group of people. At the forefront was Kungura, which in 1990 published the 'Hutu Ten Commandments' against the Tutsis.

In Rwanda in the early 1990s, more than 20 newspapers and journals incited hatred towards the Tutsis. They were accompanied by Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM), which came to be known as Rwanda's hate radio.

In December 2003, two former directors of the station, Ferdinand Nahimana and Jean Bosco Barayagwiza, were convicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda of both incitement to genocide and genocide itself. Barayagwiza was sentenced to 35 years' imprisonment; Nahimana to imprisonment for the rest of his life.



"RTLM exploited the history of Tutsi privilege and Hutu disadvantage, and the fear of armed insurrection to mobilize the population, whipping them into a frenzy of hatred and violence that was directed largely against the Tutsi group... Radio heightened the sense of fear, the sense of danger and urgency giving rise to the need for action by listeners. The denigration of the Tutsi ethnicity was augmented by the visceral scorn coming out of the airwaves, the ridiculing laugh and the nasty sneer. These elements greatly amplified the impact of RTLM broadcasts... without a firearm, machete or any physical weapon, [Nahimana and Barayagwiza] caused the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians."

From the December 2003 ruling by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda against Ferdinand Nahimana and Jean Bosco Barayagwiza.

Identification

Once society has been led to accept the exclusion of a group, genocidal leaders often ensure that the identity of that group is simplified and highlighted so that its members can be isolated effectively. In Nazi Germany, Jews were forced to wear yellow stars in order to make them easy to identify.

In 1932, Rwanda's colonial rulers, the Belgians, introduced identity cards as a means of controlling the population. Each card stated the ethnicity of the holder. After independence, the cards were retained. During the 1994 genocide, they were used to differentiate Hutus from Tutsis.



Paramilitary Groups

Leaders intending to commit genocide often create militias or paramilitary youth movements to promote hatred towards the target group and frighten political opponents. Sometimes such groups become the main instruments of genocide. High unemployment can often boost their ranks.

A number of youth militias were created in Rwanda in the early 1990s. The largest and best known, the Interahamwe, staged lively rallies and offered significant material incentives to new recruits. The militia were also trained by members of Rwanda's military. When the genocide began in April 1994, Hutu militia members were estimated at nearly 30,000. They were armed and unleashed upon Tutsis and moderate Hutus.



Disarmament

Taking weapons away from the excluded group and/or arming those who hate them are further warning signs. In January 1994, the Commander of UN forces in Rwanda, General Romeo Dallaire, was warned by a Hutu informant that weapons were being stockpiled around the capital city, Kigali. General Dallaire was denied permission to seize the weapons because this was seen as going beyond the authority of the UN observer mission.

Physical Segregation

Forced displacement of members of a target minority from their homes may be a prelude to genocide. It indicates an ideology of exclusion. Those displaced may be concentrated in locations where they can be easily controlled, or dispersed into isolated areas, such as a desert, with little or no food or water.

After German occupation in 1939, Jews in Poland were forced to move to ghettos. During the three decades preceding the 1994 genocide, hundreds of thousands of Tutsis were displaced from and within Rwanda. When people are forced to flee, within their countries or crossing borders, it is often a warning sign that threats or mass atrocities are already underway.



Ntarama church, located in the Bugesera region. Decades before the genocide, Tutsis from elsewhere in Rwanda were forced to relocate to Bugesera in large numbers. It was regarded as a hostile environment that would not favour the incoming population. In 1994, thousands were massacred at this church. © Glen Powell/Agis Trust

Genocide

Genocide occurs differently in different places and at different times in history. The Nazis built death camps in Poland for Europe's Jews and 'non-Aryans' and transported millions of people to their deaths. Rwandan extremists achieved it by turning the whole country into a killing zone – where neighbour was turned against neighbour.

Tutsis taking refuge in schools, hospitals and churches were surrounded, attacked and massacred. Roadblocks all over Rwanda served as killing sites for Tutsis trying to escape.

The efficient Rwandan bureaucracy helped to ensure that orders to kill were passed on and carried out swiftly and systematically, aided by a culture of unquestioning obedience to government.

Denying Genocide

Genocide does not end with the mass killings. Perpetrators seek to erase even the memory of the event from history and deny it ever occurred.

During and after mass murder, perpetrators may seek to destroy evidence, deny atrocities, minimize them or pretend they are something else. They may argue that attacks were in self-defence, part of a civil war or counter-insurgency. Recognising the crime of genocide undermines justifications for mass murder and is the first step toward ensuring it does not happen again.



The mass grave at Nyatanga, where 2,000 Tutsis were massacred after the withdrawal of UN troops from the Ecole Technique Officielle (ETCO) on 11 April 1994. © James Smith/Agis Trust

Regional Destabilization

Genocide-related violence can destabilize a whole region. When genocide ended in Rwanda, its perpetrators fled to Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo). Their presence was a trigger for the wars that followed between Rwanda and Zaire, which drew in other neighbouring countries. The conflict left over 3 million dead and 1.5 million displaced.



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Background picture: A Hutu militia woman stands beside the road in Gikomero, Rwanda, 12 June 1994. © Alexander Joel/AP/Getty Images



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