

Speech on the Prevention and Elimination of Mass Atrocities (Debate Concluded)

June 22, 2012

Honourable senators, I come with this inquiry with not only personal experience, but also in the capacity of being a senior fellow at the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at the Kennedy School at Harvard, where we have been engaged in assisting the Obama administration to bring in new direction from his office in regard to the prevention and elimination of mass atrocities; and as a senior fellow at the Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies at Concordia University, which produced the report entitled *Mobilizing The Will To Intervene: Leadership and Action to Prevent Mass Atrocities*. Again, the Obama administration has acknowledged that report and we have met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs to discuss.

Finally, I come to honourable senators as a member of the United Nations Secretary-General's Office of the Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide, with colleague Gareth Evans, who is the lead in the "responsibility to protect" concept, and also Desmond Tutu, who has been one of our primary advisers.

I bring honourable senators a bit of history. I will go further than CNN history, which is last week, and take honourable senators to 18 years ago when, in the first days of the commencement of conflict in Rwanda, nations sent in reconnaissance parties to look at the situation and to recommend to their nations whether or not they would intervene in stopping this catastrophe. As no one had intervened, no one responded to the calls for the prevention of this previous to that date.

They all responded that they would not recommend sending in forces because nothing there worthy of their intervention. There were no strategic resources — oil or so on — and the country was not in a strategic location. All that was there were human beings, and there were too many of them anyway; it was overpopulated. The human dimension did not sway any of the decision-makers of the world in any of the 191 countries of the world.

On April 28 of that same year, three weeks into the genocide, with approximately 175,000 bodies floating in the rivers and in various fields, I got a call from the military adviser to the Secretary-General. At that time, it was General Baril, a Canadian, who essentially told me that the cavalry was not going to be coming over the hill and that the UN had pulled out 2,100 of my troops, even though I had submitted a plan of reinforcement to stop the genocide. We were essentially left to our own devices, and no one wanted to engage in the plan, although the UN had accepted the plan.

The genocide was called such on May 17, which was six weeks into the genocide, and by then there were close to 400,000 bodies and nearly 3 million internally displaced refugees. Although the Security Council did approve that finally I would be reinforced to stop the killing and the movement of people, no country came. Not one country responded during the genocide. Only after the fact did we actually throw nearly \$2 billion in humanitarian aid to help the nearly, at that time, 4 million refugees and internally displaced people.

This was an inability to respond. Even though there were countries in Africa prepared to send troops, they did not have the means to get there or the equipment to be employed. In fact, they even refused to give us ammunition to be able to intervene. That inability to respond was reflective of the time of the post-Mogadishu/"Black Hawk Down" scenario where American soldiers were dragged through the streets. There was the complete reversal by Bill Clinton of wanting to engage in any humanitarian effort, particularly if there was a risk of casualties. There was no self-interest there, except human beings.

In 1996, Prime Minister Chrétien agreed and launched a team in order to go into the eastern Congo and attempt to bring back the nearly 300,000 refugees who were under attack and get them back into Canada. Canada was leading a mission that ultimately failed. It failed because, one, it was not there in time; and, two, we did not have the capacity to lead that mission, both in intelligence and strategic lift. As such, many of the countries that could have provided assets did not do so.

In 2005, Senator Jaffer and I, with Ambassador Fowler, were called to Prime Minister Paul Martin's office to have a meeting with the then-Chief of the Defence Staff and some of his principal staff to look at what we would do with Darfur, where over 2.5 million people were under attack at that time. They were being

killed, murdered and raped. The African Union was attempting to deploy forces to stop the slaughter.

The meeting was ad hoc as there was no planning available at National Defence, Foreign Affairs or even CIDA to respond to a mass atrocity and how we would engage, with whom, with what assets, through the UN or a regional power. Since then, we have been able to lead the way in advancing our concerns in that regard and trying to respond.

The approval in September 2005 of the "responsibility to protect" concept has been a guide, if not a doctrine, to try to respond when we see massive abuses of human rights within a nation state. It has been used a couple of times in Côte d'Ivoire. It was used even after the Kenyan elections a few years ago when four genocidal radio stations were launching ethnic disasters. It was used — although not called such — in Libya and to great success.

With those tools there, the question is: How well have we actually operationalized our ability to respond to not only the crisis of mass atrocity and potential genocide but how are we going to prevent them, that is to say, to build a credible capacity to deter people from wanting to go that route within a nation state?

Let me read some of my notes in this regard. When I spoke in May on Canada's commitment to the prevention and elimination of mass atrocities, I knew I was not speaking alone. I knew I was speaking to the same concerns shared by many honourable senators and fellow Canadians.

Today, this is even clearer to me. Senators from both sides have spoken out and reinforced what I already knew to be true. As Canadians, we are deeply affected by what happens to our fellow citizens across the globe. We are deeply affected when human beings of flesh and blood like us are stacked on the sides of the roads like cord wood, when mothers and daughters are systematically raped as a means of warfare, and when families are bombed out of their homes and left exposed to disease and starvation. We are deeply affected because we know that this is not about images on the screen or words on pages; it is about real people whose eyes you can look into.

I want to thank Senator Eggleton for his insightful comments and particularly Senator Segal, the internationalist and humanitarian that he is, for his support and perspective on this subject.

I want to particularly mention Senator Jaffer, who gave us — not because it was emotional — a reality check of how there are Canadians who have lived through these catastrophic scenarios and have been affected by them. Those scenarios could have been abated, if not even prevented, if we had had the will and the capabilities at the time to respond to them.

I want to recognize them and I would like to recognize the other Canadians who have stood together in the midst of unimaginable suffering and depravity in Rwanda, Kosovo, Sudan, the Republic of Congo, Libya, et cetera, and who are still there, both in uniform or as civilians, diplomats, development people, humanitarians and members of NGOs.

Honourable senators, the message is clear: it is absolutely imperative that we immediately increase our capacity to prevent and eliminate mass atrocities. This is both a moral duty and a practical responsibility.

We can take concrete action and use the benefit of our knowledge to reduce the likelihood of mass atrocities as much as possible. When this is not possible, we must act as quickly, effectively and decisively as possible.

To this end, we must develop, within our institutions, a framework for preventing and eliminating mass atrocities. Some countries have already undertaken this task and we can thus benefit from their expertise.

The Interagency Atrocities Prevention Board in the United States has already been mentioned in this regard. In the end, however, we will have to determine what works best for us. One thing is clear: our primary objective must be prevention, and not just reaction.

Honourable senators, prevention does not help when atrocities are taking place. When we start counting the number of casualties, it is already too late. We have to look at the root causes of violence and instability in order to prevent them.

To attack these root causes, we need a coherent policy that goes above and beyond our diplomatic and military capacities, a policy that uses diplomatic leverage, development projects and security intelligence data. All this is essential for anticipating catastrophes.

With regard to development and capacity building, we have to be aware of countries' internal dynamics, not only in terms of economic potential but also in terms of social and political dynamics. In other words, we have to be aware of the unresolved grievances and social divides that are lead to repression and massive outbreaks of violence.

In addition to capacity building, we have to make the most of all of the early warning mechanisms available to us. We have a lot to gain from direct contact with NGOs. They know the situation on the ground. They are the eyes and ears of the world.

The same goes for our diplomats, who, in addition to disseminating Canadian values and fulfilling their missions under the UN or regional, intraregional or bilateral authorities, can make good use of their intimate knowledge of the local political and social situation to sound the alarm.

Even when there is an information shortage, we still have options. The Canadian Security Intelligence Service is responsible for investigating and reporting on threats to Canada's security, including terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, espionage and information security breaches.

That brings me to my recommendations, which is probably more appropriate at this time.

Let me walk through the recommendations with regard to this inquiry, which I hope is passed so that I can return to the Minister of Foreign Affairs to seek his support and his advice on implementation.

Last month I began by giving an overview of the big picture detailing the growing significance of mass atrocities in international peace and security and the impact that it has on us, as a nation, including right down to the municipal levels where diasporas are being dragged into some of these complex scenarios. Today I wish

to give you a few specific recommendations on how we might move this agenda forward.

First, I recommend that the Prime Minister should make the prevention and elimination of mass atrocities a national priority. President Obama is looking for that support in this initiative that he has taken within his country. This will send a message about the seriousness with which Canada approaches the issue of mass atrocities, and it will allow us to take advantage of our unique opportunity to engage strategically with the U.S. government on this shared priority.

Second, we need an international security minister in the cabinet, or an analogous position with a clear mandate, who can assume ownership and take responsibility of directing timely and decisive responses to situations of mass atrocities when necessary. We created a capability when we were engaged in a conflict to assist a nascent democracy to bring good governance, rule of law, human rights and gender equality in the case of Afghanistan, but in the case of these atrocities, that capability has been brought neither to fruition nor to their attention.

As Senator Segal suggested, this individual, this position, could be a senior appointee who could coordinate an inter-agency group consisting of, as a starting point, National Defence, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and CIDA.

Third, the Parliament of Canada could convert the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Prevention of Genocide and Other Crimes Against Humanity into a standing joint committee. We are all aware of the importance of parliamentary committees in pursuit of national goals, yet prevention and elimination of mass atrocities is addressed through a disparate group of parliamentary committees, which ultimately leads to a fragmentation of efforts. If we are to pursue seriously the prevention and elimination of mass atrocities, we need a permanent committee with an exclusive mandate to monitor areas of concern and study the prevention and elimination of mass atrocities and look at contingency plans.

Fourth, we should develop specialized training and operational standards to guide our Armed Forces. The work we have been doing out of Harvard has now been adopted by the U.S. army, and they are including it in their doctrine. A

coherent policy will help us avoid the use of our Armed Forces unnecessarily and at risk and even the fear of their use; but, should the occasion arise where we are called upon to use robust force even beyond what was employed in Libya, it is of the utmost importance that our men and women in uniform are specially trained and prepared to respond in a secure and effective manner to this very complex situation where the civilian population of a nation is both the target and the element that must be protected.

Fifth, we need to promote public dialogue on the role of Canada in the prevention of mass atrocities. The government should take part in and host discussions in the public domain on the roles that we, as Canadians, will take in the prevention of mass atrocities. It is only by coming to a common understanding of our stance that we can truly move forward in a unified, cohesive manner and not continue to crisis manage ad hoc and, hopefully at times, even learn lessons.

Sixth, and last, I want to end with a recommendation that is readily achievable and that will take us a great deal forward. A few weeks ago, on May 30, the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Prevention of Genocide and Other Crimes Against Humanity, chaired by myself, with as vice-chairs MPs John McKay, Megan Leslie and Chris Alexander, brought in Dr. Simon Adams from the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect in New York City to speak about a project that is being undertaken for permanent missions in the UN to implement a centre of government efforts within governments in order to coordinate between willing governments the ability to respond to these crises.

I am out of time and I thank you for your attention.