EVAP Ep. 1: Rita Izsák-Ndiaye

Fri, 1/15 1:21AM   43:26

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, communities, countries, special rapporteur, atrocity prevention, roma, belonging, government, tensions, hate mongers, conversations, society, places, climate change, minorities, kaduna, problem, mass atrocities, racism, atrocities

SPEAKERS

Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall, Rita Izsák-Ndiaye

Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 00:11

Welcome to Expert Voices on Atrocity Prevention, a podcast by the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. I'm Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall, Publications Director at the Global Centre. Over the last year, we've had multiple conversations and public events around what it means to prevent and respond to atrocities at a granular level. These conversations have ranged from discussing the relationship between R2P and human rights violations to situating atrocity prevention within the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, and to understanding the preventive and restorative aspects of pursuing investigations, justice and accountability. To explore these dynamics further, this podcast will feature one-on-one conversations with practitioners from the field of human rights, conflict prevention, atrocity prevention and other related agendas. These conversations will give us a glimpse of the personal and professional side of how practitioners approach human rights protection and atrocity prevention. We hope that through these conversations, we can explore challenges, identify best practices, and share lessons learned on how we can protect populations more effectively. So we're delighted to have our first conversation today with Ms. Rita Izsák-Ndiaye, an expert voice on human rights protection and atrocity prevention. She currently serves as a rapporteur for the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination [CERD], and was previously the UN Special Rapporteur on minority rights. We're also pleased that during 2019, she joined the

International Advisory Board of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. It's such an honor to have you with us. Thank you for joining us today, Rita.

R Rita Izsák-Ndiaye 01:48
Thank you so much for having me. Hi.

J Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 01:52
Rita, I think it may help to start with a bit of background on you and what motivated you to work in this field. Your UN bio says that you are inspired by your own experiences of prejudice and discrimination. Can you share with us a bit about your background and identity and how this has helped shaped your passions for human rights and what led you on this current career path?

R Rita Izsák-Ndiaye 02:13
Yeah, thank you very much. What I can say is that I was born in a small town in southern Hungary, to a mother of Roma origin, or Gypsy, as some people know this ethnic group, and my father was an ethnic Hungarian, so their marriage was one of the very first in Hungary, which was a mixed marriage. And what made it worse is that my mom was an orphan. She was institutionalized at the age of eleven. And so when my father, who came from a well-established agricultural family, and married my mom, it was a big scandal in Hungary. And I should also say that my father is an ethnic Hungarian man from a family who was residing previously in Czechoslovakia. And they were transferred to Hungary by the population exchanges. So my mom had a difficult fate because she was Roma, and my father was in difficult fate because he was Hungarian. So for me, I really embraced both identities and both cultures, and I felt just very comfortable with both of them. I didn't really recognize it from an early age—some of the responses I got from the society was actually because of this origin, and especially because of my Roma origin, but it became very clear when I was working as a student. Well, it wasn't really an internship—it was actually a paid job, but that time with the administration, and one day I just didn't get invited anymore to the job, and when I asked the administration of this company why, they told me that it was too obvious that I am a Roma girl, and it's too shameful for this company to be represented by a Gypsy girl. At that time I was in the law school. I was a third year law student. I spoke German. I spoke English. And it was really a wake up call that in today's world, still what matters is where you come from, who your parents are, and not your merits, not your qualifications, not your own personality, your own skills. And so for me, this was the push. It was a very painful experience, but I'm also very grateful because I knew that I have to use my law degree for human rights. And right after this

experience, I joined an international Roma rights organization, and I became a minority advocate, and which I remain in my entire life. So I think this is an example of how a bad experience can actually be very inspiring and just lead you to the right path to recognize what you are supposed to do with your life.

J

Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 04:57

It's incredible and such an interesting way to flip a painful experience into a really positive career that has touched many people. So right now you're serving as a rapporteur for CERD. And previously, you were a rapporteur on minority issues for the UN from 2011 to 2017. So, I have a few sort of questions about this work. I think one thing that not many of us outside of sort of the UN and UN-treaty-body world know what CERD does or what your work looks like on a day-to-day basis, so I'm wondering if you can tell us a little bit about how your role contributes to the protection of vulnerable minorities around the world and maybe how that differs from the work you did as special rapporteur.

R

Rita Izsák-Ndiaye 05:52

Yes, thank you. It's true—I don't think that many people who just work on the ground are familiar with the UN system in general, and that's very painful because I think we can be useful. I don't dispute that there is a lot of room for improvement for the United Nations, but committees like mine can be very relevant. What people usually know about us is that we receive governments and then we review what they are trying to do to fight against racism and racial discrimination, but we also do a lot of other things that people don't really know about, and one of them is that we receive early warning and urgent action letters. So if there is a community, and very often these are indigenous peoples who are trying to defend their land lately, if there is any violation that a community faces, they can come to us and say, "Please do something quickly because we are afraid that we can be evicted, we can be abused, harassed, killed." There are all kinds of unfortunate situations of human rights violations against these groups. And then we try to get in touch as soon as we can with the government and then try to correspond with them, so they they know that we are watching them. And, you know, that is our monitoring mechanism over their actions. And we also receive individual complaints and communications, and just two weeks ago, during our last online session, we decided about a case. Again, it involved indigenous peoples—the Sámi from Sweden—and we ruled that their rights were violated, and Sweden did not respect their right to land, and there was no free prior and informed consent, then consent was given to your company. And so we also do these type of things. But we, for example, I adopted a very important general recommendation on racial profiling, which I recommend everybody to read, because it really goes into, "What is racial profiling? Why does it happen? What are the consequences? How is algorithmic

bias, for example, playing a role in it?" And so we do quite a lot of things. You asked me what is the difference between this role and being a special rapporteur, and I must be very honest with you. There is a big difference, and the fact that I was first a special rapporteur, and now I am a treaty body member—it's even more obvious to me, and this is really the power of field visits, which I cannot do as a treaty body member. When you are a special rapporteur, and you visit a country, it's an amazing experience to have access to information and the access to communities like I think in almost no other position in the world. If you're an independent human rights expert coming from the United Nations, it's almost everybody who is ready to meet you. So when I went to countries like Iraq, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Cameroon, Brazil, Ukraine, so many, you know, you can meet the Prime Minister. You can meet the foreign minister, one-on-one. You can ask all the questions you want. But then you can also meet the Speaker of the Parliament, you can meet all the ministers, and then you can leave the Capitol, leave everybody behind, and go to the field, go to the communities, meet school directors, religious leaders, community leaders, activists, young people, women only, IDPs. So you have access to all these people, and you see where they live. You see their natural environment. You can hear from them firsthand what they feel, and these are people and communities who would never be able to come to Geneva for a treaty body session. So what I miss from the CERD committee is the actual feel of what these communities go through and what they struggle with because it's only the wealthy, well-established, elite civil society organizations that can come to report to us, and they are very appreciated because we need their voices, but that just means going to those people who are really the most vulnerable, who don't speak any languages, who really struggle in their everyday lives because for me, this is what indicates, you know, where a society fails And these communities, which are completely neglected, abandoned, sidelined, forgotten, for me, they were the important voices to measure what a country is doing, you know, to really show that everybody belongs and everybody's important.

Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 10:26

That's a very incredible comparison, and I feel like we've heard similar observations from others who have had kind of these shifting roles within the UN system. I know in the piece we published earlier this year by Ivan Šimonović, he had a similar observation about the kind of capacity he had to work with vulnerable populations as Assistant to the High Commissioner in New York versus when he was special advisor on R2P. So it's sort of refreshing, although a little bit disappointing to hear kind of similar views that once you're disconnected from the communities, it really impacts your ability to sort of see the progress, see where the needs are most, and so that's incredible. I guess, since you've been able to interact with communities on the ground, I'm wondering what you've learned about prejudices, biases, discrimination, racism, kind of how minorities are treated and

how that may connect to sort of atrocity risks that we see.

R

Rita Izsák-Ndiaye 11:43

Yeah, I think the main observation I have is that that is a false narrative, that people just wake up one morning and start hating each other. I have been in communities who had no problem living together ten years ago, and now they are completely separated from each other based on their religion. And when I read reports and narratives about, you know, "we just started having an interreligious tension between the communities," you must know that something is wrong. We don't operate like that. If your neighbor looks different, if he prays differently, if she speaks a different language, you won't just wake up one day and start hating this person. This is all triggered and instigated and manipulated by others. And usually what happens is that, that you must have an enabling environment for these tensions to be born. And usually this really depends on the political powers, because if there is a deficit in the rule of law, in democracy or in good governance, if you have an unequal competition for resources, for power, for land, for positions, this is when communities now start measuring each other against the others. And this is when they fear that there is bias by the decision makers, along ethnic or religious or national, on any other lines. This is when these tensions arise. It's not just that they happen one day, but it's because there are powers who are responsible for making people feel that one is more, and one is less. One is superior; one is inferior. And I remember my experience in going to Nigeria many years ago, and going to northern Nigeria, in Kaduna, for example, and seeing that the Muslims and the Christians all live together in one place as one community, absolutely no issues. And then I went back a few years ago as a special rapporteur on a mission, and I was told that the situation is completely different in Kaduna. And I wanted to go and see, and I did my readings and my preparations before and all the reports I found was, well, you know, the Catholics and the Christians and the Muslims just don't get along. And you know, this is what it is. And for me, I knew there must be more than this. So when I arrived, and when I started conducting the interviews and talking to people, this is when it became clear that this all started because of climate change. All what happened is that the Muslims who were herders had to come more and more south with their cows, and the Christians who own the land, they're more and more disturbed by the passing cows, because it, of course, it impacted the way they could cultivate their lands. And so it was clearly a climate change issue, which was not that the powers that time and so it became, you know, a problem between those who have the cows and those who have the land, and they happen to belong to different religious groups. But this has somehow all been disappearing in the narratives and all the reports are about, you know, "these people hate each other." So you really have to go and and understand what's going on. And as I said, often it's actually really in the hands of these political parties that they fail to find solutions in time. And then it escalates to a level then

that people start pointing at each other, even if they had no issues living together before with each other. So those neighbors who were cooperating, sending their kids to the school together now live in separate Christian and Muslim neighborhoods. They even have neighborhood watchers, you know, these patrols who are looking at their properties because they are so afraid of the other. And so I think you must be very careful than we just accept narratives about people's hatred and bias because it never gets born out of people's own initiative. There is always something behind, and we really must do our best to dig the stories and get the full picture. Otherwise, it will be completely misled.

J

Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 16:15

That's very, very interesting. I'm wondering, since you mentioned climate change as a factor in the Nigeria context—obviously, there are a lot of different triggers around the world—but climate change is appearing to be a bigger factor in a lot of the situations we follow at the Global Centre, including Nigeria, as well as more recently the Sahel. Since we can't kind of abruptly address the climate change issue in a way that will necessarily very quickly slow these trends, what do you think leaders can do to slow the effects of climate change on the dynamics between communities? Is there a way that we can either kind of attempt to not solve but kind of address the potential triggers between communities before climate change really has that depth of impact on the population or, in the case of places like Kaduna, what can be done to sort of reverse the trend once those tensions have been created?

R

Rita Izsák-Ndiaye 17:32

I must admit, I am not a climate change expert. I wish I knew more about this, but if I can react to your question from a different angle, and saying that I think that one of the secret lies in making sure that all these voices are heard in time because I think in many countries, the problem is, and you mentioned climate change, but we could mention a lot of other societal challenges and inequalities. I think one of the main problems is that these voices are not heard and not heard in time. And if you look at government structures, in so many places, they completely lack the voices of minority communities, and usually those who are more vulnerable than the others. And I must say here that I'm very critical of our own UN institutions because they are the same. And when I traveled around all these countries, I was shocked how I was trying to find contacts in the community, and both the government and sometimes our UN colleagues had absolutely no idea how to connect me with these people. And so my question is how do we want to prevent atrocities, if you don't have that channeling back the information in time? So the problem, I think, lies in the lack of representation of communities affected by these challenges and problems because imagine the climate change situation like what you

said—if there is the body, an institution, a structure, a mechanism that is supposed to gather the voices of communities, then you could go and report and say, "Look, I have an issue. I want to come through this field that is not yet available," or at the other side, you know, "all these people are coming with their herd and their cows, and they are destroying my court. What can I do?" The problem is that there are no institutional establishments that in many, many, many places that would be dedicated to look into these inter-communal issues and tensions. And so what I recommend many times during my country visit is to ensure that you have channels of communication with the different communities, so you have a trust going on. You have this exchange sharing going on, so you know in time, you know what is happening and what you can expect. So imagine if there is a community which knows that they will be evicted, or they are about to be evicted by a municipality. If they could go straight to the government and say, "This is about, this will happen to me, please do something," the government could work out something with the municipality, and you could, you know, maybe minimize the damage. But many of these communities are completely lost. And I am bringing up this example because it was frequent in my case. I went to Cameroon, in a small town where a pastoralist Mbororo community was about to be evicted, and that time I listened to them, but I had to leave Cameroon and, of course, go back to my home. And two months later, I received a phone call from somebody who works with this community, and they said, you know, "Their houses are completely ruined, and then they destroy their livelihood. And these people are lost, and they don't know what to do. Can you do something?" And I said, "Okay, let me write a letter to the government and just see what we can do." So we followed up on the case, and we brought to the government, we brought to the stakeholders who were involved, and they could move to their land, and they could get back to their property, so all they needed was an international attention, somebody who is there to support them. So imagine if there were government institutions that are bringing in these voices. Many, many of these atrocities could be prevented in time. So I think there is a big question about the structures and the representation of communities. And I think this could be a key point in trying to prevent atrocities to happen.

Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 21:34

That's very, very interesting. And I'm just wondering if you could, from your experience, elaborate a little bit more on kind of the difference between these situations where you see minority rights violated, you see tensions between communities, or just sort of widespread bias or racism, whether it be within the community or within the government, and situations where that kind of escalates to the atrocity level, because it's not always the case, you know, and in many places, racism exists, you know, for long periods of time without ever triggering atrocities. So have you noticed any trends where there's sort of clear things that kind of come together in a perfect storm that escalate atrocities, or if

there are other factors at play?

R

Rita Izsák-Ndiaye 22:35

I think my answer might sound trivial, but I think it comes back to leadership, making it clear that everybody is equal, and everybody belongs, and everybody has the same dignity in a society. I think that the most fragile societies I have seen were at the brink of falling apart, because there were communities who were completely left out, and there was no efforts to include them into the national psyche. And so I think it comes back to the question about who feels belonging and whether the leadership and especially political powers make clear to everybody that these are our people. It doesn't matter whether they are poor, it doesn't matter whether they have a different religion, or language, they are darker or lighter, or whatever, but they are our own people. And I think you can measure it, and I tried to measure it during my travels by asking the questions of the community, whether they are proud to be a citizen of this country and how they identify themselves, because, and I used to use this example, there are countries where I traveled, for example, Malaysia, where you have the Indians, the Malays, the Chinese, and other communities, but if you ask them, "Are you proud to be a Malaysian"? they say, "Yes, I am. But of course, I am also belonging to this community. We have our specialties. We have this culture. We have this language. But if you go to some other countries, and I used to bring up the Kurds in Iraq, for example, it's a completely different story. And when I was in Iraq, in the Kurdistan Region, they did not even want to fly the Iraqi flag, because they said, "You know, we are so different, and we don't really belong, and we want to be independent." So these are the signs when people identify not as a citizen of a country but based on other identities. And very often you can measure it by asking people, "So how do you feel?" and if they feel like, you know, I am this and this ethnic person, but I know that I am not a welcome citizen of this country, you know that there is a problem. And so it comes back to this political viel of making sure that everybody has the rights to equality but also to equal dignity. And this is a big issue because it comes back to education, to media, to self-representation, to national equity columns. What do you teach about communities? What do you teach about belonging? Further, you acknowledge that all these different communities contributed to the culture of our society, or whether you deny it, or whether you even twist the facts, and you change history, and you just create the scapegoats. So I think it really comes back to the main messages coming from the leaders about "We are all one," no matter what, because then people feel like, "Ah, okay, we have differences, but we are one. Like in a family, you know, you can have some members in your family who are completely different, but it's family. You would accept them, you would talk to them, you would work out issues, even if you have tensions, you would still sit at the same dinner table, through your frustration, but you would try to work it out. But if you don't feel that this is a family, you know, you just turn your back, and then you leave,

and then this is when I think it's too late to try to bring people together.

J

Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 26:17

That's excellent. I think you've hinted at this a little bit through talking about what governments need to do to sort of improve that cohesion between communities and sort of improve that inclusive feeling, but I think one of the interesting things about being a special rapporteur is that you don't just visit countries that are in crisis. You also sort of visit tons of countries throughout the world. And so I'm wondering if, whether they be countries that had a crisis that needed to be addressed or just any state in general, have you seen sort of best practices or particular examples that stood out as really good policies that governments have pursued to protect protect minority rights or decrease racism and discrimination?

R

Rita Izsák-Ndiaye 27:18

It's interesting. I should think about it in terms of of practicalities and what causes that. But I must say that the very country that I am in now, Senegal, is a very good example. People don't talk about it much. We didn't have a crisis, but there is a 5% Christianity and a 95% of Islam. And there has never been any interreligious issues here. And I believe that it's because all the Christian holidays are had with the same respect as Islamic holidays. You know, when my kids go to the school, they have a holiday almost every two weeks because we celebrate every Islamic holiday, every Christian holiday, and then all the international ones, and then the Senegalese ones. And I think you have countries like this, which are not in the, somehow in the light, because they are just doing so well, and they are so peaceful. And I wish that we had more conversations about these type of countries where, you know, everybody talks, especially in the West, and Europe about Islam just being so aggressive, and, you know, you can't exist as a Christian person in a Muslim country because they've tried to change you by force. And, you know, you have so many prejudices, and I'm sitting here, I'm saying, "Hello!" You know, I'm trying to write in my comments into these social media posts and saying, "Open your eyes." There are so many countries in this world which operate well, but we don't talk about them because they are silent, and exactly because they are so peaceful, you know, don't have all these news about, you know, like tensions and conflicts and war and whatever, because they are doing so well. And I hope that in the future we can somehow highlight all these countries which, despite, you know, some challenges like any other countries, are really doing well, and they are resistant, and they are so resilient. And even here, of course, there is always an attempt by some Islamists, you know, to try to destroy the peace, but everybody rejects it as like, "No, no, we have never had these interreligious conflicts." Senegal had a Christian president at the very beginning. So, you know, you have countries like this, and

of course, also if you think about places like Switzerland with having all the languages and then the territorial arrangements with the languages, and you know, they have no issues. So I think that we should really try to probably have more research about what are the factors in these countries, which ensure that they are peaceful and despite the challenges that exist everywhere, they are still so coherent and so stable, and they are not even at any point of history in a danger to fall apart or, you know, going into civil war. And so I think we need to believe that there are these places, and it's possible. But of course, it's the news, which is always interested in the negatives. And I hope that we can counterbalance this somehow in the future. I think we have a big responsibility in doing that.

J Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 30:25
Yeah, I think you're right that the news tends to focus on the drama, as opposed to the heartwarming stories. And I'm glad you mentioned Senegal and your experience there, because I think there are some very positive examples in the West Africa region. You know, Ghana is another one where they've had conflicts, but they have this National Peace Council, where they've been a bit meticulous about making sure that every single religious and ethnic group is represented on the Council. And it's done a lot to kind of prevent similar conflicts from coming up again. So there's definitely a lot of positive success stories to celebrate in that region.

R Rita Izsák-Ndiaye 31:11
I'm excited.

J Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 31:15
I'm wondering if there are any particular examples where you felt your role was extra important, you were very useful in addressing a situation in a country, either as special rapporteur or in your new role with the treaty body.

R Rita Izsák-Ndiaye 31:36
I think again it comes back to the simple things about just keeping an eye on communities who could not be taken seriously. And, you know, it sounds so little, but I think that every time I travel to a place, and I manage to make that connection with people who felt like the UN is present. In some of these hidden communities, the pygmies or, you know, when I go to rural areas, for them the United Nations is something which is in a very far place, you know, like a fortress, something absolutely unreachable, and unapproachable. And

then when you go, and they see you, and you are a face of this institution, even if an independent one, it makes people feel like they are important. And you know, when they share their views with you, and then you take it down, and then you put it in a report, I think it can really give them that boost that they matter. So just to listen to people can sometimes really empower because they can feel like, "Okay, what I say is actually important." And I also felt that the UN has extremely important convening power, which we have to utilize more in the future. I remember when I was in Sri Lanka, for example, and I brought together a meeting with all the minorities—the Roma, the Afro descendants, the indigenous peoples—that were really all kinds of communities that never met before. And then you looked around this group of people who could have been in any country because they were so diverse, and they told me, "You know, we never came together." They never knew that our concern is shared by others, because, for example, mother tongue education was shared by every single participant who came to that meaning. And I believe that sometimes what the UN needs to do is just to create that space for people to come together and to realize that they are bound by common interest and common challenges, because I think by then you can have them, you know, joining their forces. And I often believe that once I leave a country, then I leave this community stronger, because now they know each other, they know the connections, and they know me. So they know that even if I leave the country, I leave my email address, and they can contact me, and as I just said, in this example of Cameroon, they use it. So sometimes if they are in trouble, they contact me. And so I think that of course, the UN does a lot of big things, like preventing all these conflicts, or the peace building, the peacekeeping missions, the vaccinations of children, feeding them, and we should keep this in mind. But I think sometimes it's a very different thing, of just empowering communities by your presence and by the connection and by making them really believe that they matter because sometimes governments don't project that idea and that approach. And I think that the UN must do that because then they will have more courage to go to the government and seek an appointment and talk about their own problems because they say, "Hey, I told this to the UN as well, and they were very supportive, so now you have to listen to me as well." So I'm also hoping that we can have them, you know, also in international level to have a better collaboration with the power brokers in the society.

Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 35:14

That's excellent. I have one sort of closing question for you that builds on on that idea. I think since you've had experience as an insider within the UN as well as someone working with civil society and Roma communities, and also just your interaction with civil society within countries, is there anything that sort of ordinary citizens or civil society groups who aren't necessarily, you know, as you mentioned earlier, the wealthy, powerful ones that can gain access to the UN on a more regular basis than when the special rapporteurs or

others visit countries, is there anything they can do to strengthen social cohesion or bring attention to the issues that put them most at risk? I guess, bring it to the attention of the power brokers, as you mentioned, or just to even local, powerful leaders that could possibly address the risks.

R

Rita Izsák-Ndiaye 36:22

I think that in my experience in these past 20 years, the biggest problem I identified was the silence of the majority. It's the inactivity and sometimes the indifference of people who are not directly affected by discrimination, by racism, by conflict, by atrocities. And when I grew up, and as a Roma person I heard about the Holocaust, for example, you know, I could not imagine how it happened. As a child, I could not believe that people would just watch that thousands have been "cured." And because that was the reality of my ancestors, right? And I was, I just rejected this whole idea that this is not possible that people will budge. And then I must say that I grew up, and I started seeing, for example, the narratives around migration. And how all these many governments in power started talking about migrants as they are just human beings without any value, and how so many people started keeping quiet, instead of saying that, you know, we have to stand up for these people. Some of them really come from war-torn countries and societies, and they need protection. But so many people were quiet. And I could, unfortunately, gradually see how the Holocaust, for example, happened or any mass atrocities happen because the issue is that a lot of people are uncomfortable to take up uneasy conversations. And especially in the age of social media, I know a lot of people who watch this news, very disturbing narratives about, you know, minorities, indigenous peoples, migrants, refugees, poor people in general, and all those who just don't have a poverty society. And they disagree with the content of what they read, but they are just tired of arguing. So they read an article, they shake their head, and they don't do anything because they say, you know, what's the point in getting into a fight with these extreme rightests, with the hate mongers, with all those who are inciting, you know, all this racism on the internet, and so people keep quiet, and they close their laptops, and they are disturbed, but they don't take a stand. And this is why it has been really my cross that I have carried for a few years now to convince people to get into the debate. And I always tell people, your goal is not to convince the hate mongers that they are wrong because they have an interest. They have an agenda. They know what they are doing. They do it for a purpose. They do it to gain economic or financial or political power. That's clear. But you have to take up the fight because you want to show other people that they are not alone with their opinions. So if there is a hate monger who writes a horrible article, you have to put your rejection, not because you want to change the person who wrote the article, but because you want to see, you want to make sure that all the people who come to that same website and read the comments can see yours, and can say, "Oh, okay,

thank God there are other people who reject this idea, who think like me, who love peace, who believe in coexistence and love between people." And I really think that this is the fight we have to find in the 21st century, especially with the COVID-19 and all the online digital world, that we have to be more outspoken. We have to be more anti-racist, and anti-hatred people, because we need to be that critical mass, and we need to encourage each other that we are more because I believe that we are more. I never doubted that, you know, those of us who believe in peace and love, we are more than those who are interested in triggering hatred. But the problem is, they are quiet. So we give a false impression that we are not there. And so I think what we need to do all of us, and this is really my message to everybody, especially young people, that just take up the fight and don't be tired because your goal is not to change the mindset of those few crazy people. Your goal is to show others that we are more, and we really can be this critical mass to fight against all this this hatred and negative energies and the bias that is around us because I think this is really how we can survive as a humanity, but we need to support each other. And if you see the first signs of somebody being targeted and violated and harassed and abused, we immediately have to stop it. And so when others they see that you are there, raising your voice, they will be encouraged to raise their voice as well. And then we can, you know, really be that movement against all the people who mean bad and who just want to destroy whenever we have built during these last centuries, not centuries, but I think the case of years now.

J

Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 41:59

Thank you for that really powerful reflection and call to action. I think you really sort of hit right on the nose something that those of us in the atrocity prevention community find both very frustrating but also is as much of our motivation for being in this field, for doing this work. And hopefully through our advocacy and everything we're working on, everything you're working on, we can inspire others to take that charge as well. So thank you for joining us today. This was a really insightful interview, and we really appreciate hearing your thoughts as well as your life experiences. I've definitely learned a lot from hearing your stories over the past hour.

R

Rita Izsák-Ndiaye 42:52

Thank you, Jaclyn. I also appreciate this opportunity, and I wish you the best at the Centre. I think what you do is very essential. I hope you can continue your work raising awareness, and we are fighting for the same cause. We are in the same boat. So I hope you will continue your work with the same strength and encouragement despite all the difficulties that we encounter these days. So thank you too for all the work you're doing there.

Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 43:19

We'll wrap it up there. Thank you for joining us for the first episode of our new podcast. If you'd like more information about the Global Centre's work on R2P, mass atrocity prevention or populations at risk of mass atrocities, visit out our website at globalr2p.org and connect with us on Twitter and Facebook @GCR2P. Until next time, I'm Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall and this has been an episode of Expert Voices on Atrocity Prevention.