

Conflict Prevention and Resolution Forum

May 8th, 2007

Preventing Mass Atrocities: Building a Long-Term Global Constituency

With the remarkable public response to the crisis in Darfur and the efficacy of several traditional and unconventional genocide prevention campaigns, this month's Conflict Prevention and Resolution Forum examined how such activism might be incorporated and sustained to create durable institutions of genocide prevention. The panel of experts explored the techniques and methodologies of creating a broader constituency of people who care deeply about stopping genocide and mass atrocities, as well as some of the most successful non-traditional outreach and prevention strategies. In addition, the panelist engaged in a discussion about how links between public awareness, a more galvanized public and greater government action can stop genocide. Panelist included: Dr. Andrea Bartoli, Founding Director, Center for International Conflict Resolution (CICR), and Professor, School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) Columbia University; Anita Sharma, Executive Director, ENOUGH, Center for American Progress and the International Crisis Group; and, Mark Hanis, Founder and Executive Director, Genocide Intervention Network. Charles Dambach, Executive Director of the Alliance for Peacebuilding, facilitated the forum.

Dr. Andrea Bartoli pointed out that in 1948 genocide, as a practice, was declared illegal by the international community – it was “abolished”, but in truth nothing changed. In contrast, the present collective response to genocide and its prevention is a very new and not at all an obvious movement. Dr. Bartoli stated that the massive action against the genocide in Darfur is uniquely American and in addition, student involvement has been one of the most effective and powerful forces in the movement. Dr. Bartoli also explained that the genocide prevention movement has been incredibly resourceful and innovative with engagement strategies.

Dr. Bartoli opined that the issue of genocide prevention and elimination is political and that those involved in the movement must recognize and confront the politics embedded in it, which, he admitted, can be very difficult. The issue is politically charged from the grassroots level all the way up to track-one politics. One of the many reasons for the difficulties in working to prevent genocide is that circumstances are very complex, and although the situation may appear to be a simple case of right and wrong, there are many layers and complexities. Dr. Bartoli pointed out that amid the complexities, the efficacy of the anti-genocide movement has, in part, been due to the presentation of the realities of the victims of genocide to the world. Thus, the international community is called on to stop these victimizations.

According to Dr. Bartoli, a major strength of the movement is that it is a bi-partisan effort; in fact, the movement is an expression of an inclusive polity. In addition, the movement includes secular and religious parties coming together. Another positive aspect of the movement is that it is active on an individual level –

individuals to individuals – not just institutions. Dr. Bartoli called the genocide prevention movement the best of global citizenship.

Mark Hanis focused on the methods of his organization, the Genocide Intervention Network, in their hopes of stopping the genocide in Darfur and in other countries around the world. Mr. Hanis shared the three aspects that he believes are needed for a truly effective intervention strategy: political will, protection and permanency. He began his discussion with a description of protection, which he believes requires the international community to *not* equate the atrocities in Darfur to a humanitarian crisis. When genocide is viewed as such, then the response tends to be like the response to a natural disaster – that is, humanitarian aid in the form of food, water, and other supplies. But Darfur, and other areas that are experiencing genocide, are experiencing a humanitarian security crisis. The short-term solutions (that tend to work in a natural disaster) do not take into consideration some of the most pressing issues of genocide, such as the security of the people now and in the future.

Mr. Hanis explained that intervention in the genocide situation in Darfur, and the prevention of mass atrocities in other parts of the world, have very little political weight with politicians. The candidates and political leaders tend to make empty promises, but there is little reason for them to take action. According to Mr. Hanis, if and when politicians do anything about genocide in other countries it is on an ad hoc basis, and most often the campaign/organization dissolves before any action is taken. Mr. Hanis believes that permanent organizations must be set up and funded with the ability to respond in a comprehensive manner to prevent mass atrocities. In addition to permanent organizations, there should be a deeper and clearer understanding of the International Community's commitment to the *Responsibility to Protect*, which states clearly that when a country's leadership can no longer protect their own people other countries must take on that responsibly.

According to Mr. Hanis there are three tools of engagement – strategies to ensure engagement from individuals throughout the United States and throughout the world. Mr. Hanis explained that engagement strategies must be: effective, easy and entertaining. Efficacy is measured by the maximum “bang for the buck” – those activities with the best and biggest results. Mr. Hanis explained that the “easy” part is a response to the fast pace of today's world. Giving a donation, signing a petition, or getting the name and number of a local politician should not exceed five minutes of an individual's time. Finally Mr. Hanis and his colleagues know that the process must be entertaining in order to compete with Gameboys and ipods.

The tools of engagement, Mr. Hanis described, all have a common goal, which is to educate, advocate and donate. The Genocide Intervention Network works to educate the public using techniques such as a congressional score card – a system that rates how many times any and every politician has talked about preventing genocide or intervening in or stopping mass atrocities. In addition, Mr. Hanis's organization has created the anti- genocide hotline. The hotline provides a caller with the name of their representative in congress and gives the most important talking points on

genocide prevention (1-800-genocide). The hotline can then connect the caller to the politician's office. These activities also work to advocate for the prevention and intervention of genocide and mass atrocities by putting pressure on public officials. Mr. Hanis explained that it is important that companies, which help to fund the perpetrators of genocide, are made public and stopped. For instance, it is imperative to make public the names of the companies who give money for military hardware and urge them to divest. Finally, funds are desperately needed for operations such as the continuation of African Union Army and their efforts in Darfur. Mr. Hanis said that a large portion of donations from the public are used to help the African Union Army.

Mr. Hanis ended with the strong statement that our education system must be changed at the structural level. He believes that all schools should be required to teach about genocide and the effects of mass atrocities that have taken place throughout history. Mr. Hanis also recognized and pointed out that there is so much that can be done by individuals coming together to stop mass atrocities – there are many options for intervention between boots on the ground (a full-out NATO invasion) and nothing at all. The final point Mr. Hanis made was that the Genocide Convention must be promoted and protected.

The final panelist was Ms. Anita Sharma. Ms. Sharma began her presentation by pointing out, like Dr. Bartoli, how far the movement to prevent future genocide and to intervene in existing mass atrocities has evolved. Now, she stated, there is general consensus that countries and the international community have the duty to intervene and the responsibility to protect. Ms. Sharma's project, the Enough Project, capitalizes on citizen activism and the new norm of people caring about preventing mass atrocities. Ms. Sharma explained that the Enough Project aims to contribute to breaking the cycle of violence and, in addition, to supplying durable peace solutions; this is done by working to punish those who commit these atrocities and by protecting the innocent through analysis, advocacy and activism. Ms. Sharma pointed out that the messages are more complex now, it cannot simply be: "Please Mr. President, stop the genocide!" The movement must take into consideration and tackle the many aspects contributing to mass atrocities. These can include targeted divestment campaigns, along with the recognition of the realities the African Union Army are dealing with (most particularly being under manned and under funded).

Ms. Sharma also explained that the movement has made it far less easy for individuals as well as corporations, institution and political leaders to brush aside the facts of genocide. This is due in part to the tremendous amount of work being done to analyze the relationship between the United States and Sudan and Sudan and China, for example. According to Ms. Sharma, global activism is the goal; for the movement to truly be global, it is especially important for activists to pay careful attention to north-south issues. In addition, political leaders must be much more flexible and be able to nimbly respond to genocide situations with resources – in order for this to happen there must be a significant increase in political will. In conclusion, Ms. Sharma articulated that the response to the genocide in Darfur has proven that anti-genocide action is possible. This action requires mobilization of individuals, political

will on the part of leaders, and the coming together of people from across divided lines – divisions that usually inhibit collective action. The power and effect of each of the above aspects have significantly contributed to the anti-genocide movement and proved that the movement to stop and prevent genocide is possible.

The panelist all agreed that the new power of this anti-genocide movement lies in collectivity and inclusive polity. Genocide and mass atrocities should be named and stopped and the prevention of future mass atrocities must be a top priority. Finally, all the panelists felt that despite the incredible display of cooperation from individuals at the grassroots level, politicians must be held accountable and contribute to the anti-genocide movement.