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Never Again?

Never again. A short and yet infinitely poignant symbol of humanity's response to the atrocities of the Nazi Holocaust. In the strength and solemnness of this cry it is easily forgotten that we as a global society have failed so miserably to uphold this powerful condemnation of such murderous violence. There is no excuse. Since 1945 and the ending of the German attempt to exterminate world Jewry, genocide continues to be a reality and "never again" has become increasingly diluted, genocide continues.

In Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and currently in Sudan, millions of human beings were and are victims of genocide, something that we decided in 1945 should "never again" happen. Beginning in 1975 and continuing until 1979, over two million people were executed in the "killing fields" of Cambodia by the Kymer Rouge under Pol Pot. The world largely ignored the Cambodian genocide and sufficient relief efforts for Cambodia were not begun until 1991 ("Cambodia's Holocaust). In 1994 the Hutu of Rwanda killed as many as 10,000 Tutsis every day for over one hundred days, leaving approximately 800,000 Rwandans brutally massacred, one tenth of the country's population. Western countries responded by evacuating their personnel and painstakingly refrained from referring to the atrocities as genocide. By the time the UN responded with a peacekeeping force the killings had run their course ("Genocide in Rwanda").

From 1992 to 1995, over 200,000 were killed as a result of ethnic cleansing of Muslims by Serbians in Bosnia, including over 3,500 children sniped in the streets of Sarajevo and over two million people forced from their homes—ethnic cleansing of Bosnian Muslims continued until NATO's bombing campaign in 1995 ("Bosnia Genocide"). In 2003, violence broke out in the Darfur region of Sudan and the genocide there continues to this day. Estimates place the number of dead at 400,000 so far and more than two million refugees from the conflict. International response has been slow

and insignificant to halt the rising tide of killings and worsening humanitarian disaster (“The Genocide in Darfur”).

The numbers are sickening, the violence is inhumane, and the inaction is shameful, but what this does mean is that it is time for a new generation of Americans to rethink and revive the cause of “never again.” Failure to meet the idea set after the Holocaust in light of modern genocides does not by any means signal surrender or defeat—moreover, it is a reminder that words hold little power if they are not enforced by strong intentions and devotion to a cause. We must fight even harder so that future generations come to know that “never again” is not a rallying cry but a promise backed by the will and force of the world.

As Americans we hold enormous influence in the world, but we also tend to be naïve as to the conditions in other parts of the globe, due to the very prosperity that allows us such a podium for world change and reform. Education is an important part of making sure that our generation and those generations to come know the true violence and horror of genocides past and present—as the last Holocaust survivors die, it is even more important to keep the story alive, lest we dare to forget. We must all take responsibility for global genocides on multiple levels. On a national level, we have a duty to use our combined voice to influence American policies against genocide. On a community level, we must work to build general awareness of worldwide strife, support charitable causes for victims of genocide, help organize genocide education programs, and be a part of political activism on a grass-roots level. Finally, on a personal level, it is the duty of each of us to stay informed, to raise our voices against global violence, and to learn from the past so we may be better prepared to combat genocide in the future.

Having ineffectively faced five extreme cases of genocide in the last half century, the question naturally is how to prevent this atrocity once and for all. No one has ever suggested that evil will simply be defeated, much less that genocide will never gain attempt to break out in the world—thus, our only goal is prevention through education, through diplomacy, and through force as a last resort. In Bosnia, ethnic cleansing continued despite Western ultimatums at the assumption that no force would be taken like in Rwanda and Cambodia, diplomacy failed and Bill Clinton’s use of force to end the

genocide proved to be the last remaining means, succeeding in ending the ethnic cleansing (“Bosnia Genocide”). In response to Darfur we have seen the rise of our generation in its response to world genocide in mass outpourings of aid and support for the victims in Sudan, and despite enduring diplomatic action, force is nonetheless fast approaching as a last resort measure.

Certainly force cannot and should not always be the solution, and the force cannot always be that of the United States alone. Though, as the most powerful nation on earth, America needs to take a position of leadership in the global fight against genocide. Americans along with the rest of the world have an obligation to make those who would provide genocide know that “never again is not an empty threat, that diplomacy is not to be confused with passivism, and that genocide is intolerable and will be fronted had on. We must be willing to use force to prevent such atrocities if diplomacy fails, and while military intervention is quickly becoming taboo, the use of force in the prevention of such hatred and mass murder is not only more than justified, it is our moral obligation as a country founded on the fundamental principles of liberty, equality, and justice.

Another element in prevention is communication. Our generation has grown up in the information age and blogs, websites, and other high-tech means of communication which allow us to be informed and knowledgeable about the world around us like never before. Such technologies of our age are greatly responsible for the magnitude of the movement against current genocide in Darfur and will continue to be in the future. This generation must continue to take responsibility for being aware and for being alert to conflict around the world.

Perhaps the most important thing that our generation can do right now is to participate in and influence our American global policies by voting and getting involved in the political process. The younger demographic voters have long been apathetic towards their civic duty in America and as a result we have long sacrificed our voice in this country and in the United States’ response to global events. It is our duty to support strong leaders for our country who will act to counter global genocide and be willing to make tough decisions in dealing with cases of terrible violence and repression. If we want change, it is time that our generation unshackles itself from a jaded view of politics

and makes politicians know that they cannot ignore the voice of America's youth. We can stand for a hard-line response to genocide and civil war. This is our most powerful voice in taking action against genocide.

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