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Responsibility to Protect

Many of the authors entered in this contest will claim that there is a simple, “everyone wins” approach to stopping genocide, such as education, however, the harsh reality is, there simply is not. Though many do not want to accept it, the fact is the human race is generally a very cruel, animalistic, and evil species. For example, one who is simply too lazy to obtain something by his own merit will steal from one who deserves it, women are constantly harassed and sexually assaulted, and thousands are killed over trivial matters. While most people look down upon even these crimes and go by the philosophy “live and let live,” there will always be those ones who are, in a word, cruel. These are the Hitlers, the serial killers, the people who receive pleasure out of human suffering, and while people like these do not come around very often, the sad fact is that they do. Even worse is the fact that these people, and even your average person, cannot be taught to accept everyone and will not often retain the hatred with which they began. Evidence of this is racism, which still exists today, despite efforts to teach children to be color blind. Though education is an important method of preventing genocide and should be continued, it is simply not enough for there will always be those who are solely born to hate. The one way to make sure genocide is never witnessed on this planet again, as unsophisticated as it may sound is if our generations’ leading politicians make sure the world’s peacekeeping troops take action at early signs to stop the killings in their tracks.

The first reason that a quick military response is the one way to assure genocide never takes place again is that the people who get pleasure from other peoples’ pain cannot be stopped by being taught or by a simple warning. A person or group sick enough to go through with the systematic killing of a specific people will not stop simply because people tell them to. If they are so determined on extinguishing a certain group of people’s lives, for whatever reasons, they will not stop until they are either satisfied or they have killed off the whole group, or both. The only way to surely stop one willing to do such horrible things is by force. Responsibility to Protect or R2P is a concept that rose in the United Nations from the massacres in Rwanda, Darfur, and before that, Bosnia, and it holds that the world community has a moral duty to halt genocide (Katz 1). This concept includes intervening with military force, even if the killings are occurring in a sovereign nation and “removes an excuse to turn a blind eye to mass atrocities” (Katz 2). The only way to make sure genocide is topped is if this responsibility is enforced, because chances are one who is willing to kill countless people will also be willing to do

anything to keep killing. Also, they will most likely not be very interested in negotiating, since after they have started killing, they have almost nothing left to lose. Even if captured, they will almost certainly just be sentenced to death.

Also, countries with the strength and wealth necessary to stop mass killings should do so, and act in favor of the greater good. A good example of a country with power enough to give aid to those being persecuted is the United States' involvement in World War II. The U.S. failed to step into the war to help the nearly six million Jews being tortured and killed by Nazis in time. While the death count steadily rose, the U.S. stood idly by up until Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. In this case, America failed to respond to the signs, and seemed as though it was not going to help the millions being victimized by the Nazis. It even seemed that the U.S. only finally decided to enter the war because they were attacked, and not because of the countless number of people being tortured. This kind of reluctance to help those in need is appalling and selfish, and must not arise if genocide is to be stopped.

Finally, governments must not be afraid to intervene in countries where the signs of genocide start to appear. Most leaders of well developed nations are far too worried about staying politically correct to keep their office and will not put the military into action to stop a genocide just in case some voters disagree. Then, by the time the public finally sways in favor of helping the people being massacred, and the leader decides it will not hurt their chances of reelection, it will already be much too late, and already too many casualties will have already taken place. A perfect example of this can be found in Sudan. While the killings there began in early 2003, it took the U.S. Congress over a year and a half, until July 22, 2004, to declare the violence as genocide, and even then officials were careful to avoid the word (Glazer 2). In 1948 the U.N. set up the International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide to oblige countries to "prevent and punish" genocide (Glazer 2). However, most experts say the treaty is not specific about what it entails and is very vague, and most countries take much too long to determine whether or not a specific incident is genocide (Glazer 2). This occurred during the presidency of Bill Clinton, while the genocide in Rwanda was going on, and the United States failed to analyze the signs fast enough. By the time the U.S. decided to send peace keeping troops in, it was far too overdue, and nearly a million people in the Tutsi ethnic group had already been killed by the Hutu (Glazer 3). Even U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan admitted that, "The world failed Rwanda at the time of evil. The international community and the United Nations could not muster the political will to confront it" (Glazer 4).

In conclusion, quick military action from the major countries in the world is the only way to assure that genocide will never happen again. The people willing to kill thousands will not simply be taught otherwise. Countries with the power to stop genocide should do so, quickly and forcefully, and act selflessly rather than selfishly. If

the many countries who say they wish to stop genocide from happening again actually plan to stick to their word, they must not be afraid to step in before it is too late. “Never again” are very strong words when it comes to halting genocide, and it can only be fully stopped if our generation’s world leaders vow never to turn their backs on a defenseless people again and we keep our Responsibility to Protect (Glazer 4).

Works Cited

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