

MIGS' Statement on 20th Anniversary of Rwanda Genocide

In 1948, the world came together and said “never again” to the horrors of the Holocaust. Yet 20 years ago today, the international community turned away as 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutu were killed within 100 days. Today the Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies at Concordia University stands with the people of Rwanda to remember those who lost their lives and support the survivors of this tragedy.

As we mark this sad anniversary, it is also our duty to reflect on lessons learned. The Rwandan genocide did not come out of nowhere – it was well planned and there were countless opportunities to prevent and stop it. Nobody can say we did not know. We did not act. As the on-going massacres in Syria, South Sudan and the Central African Republic prove, we still fail to act on the lessons of the Rwandan genocide and the other genocides of the past one hundred years. Generating the political will to prevent mass atrocities remains one of the central challenges today. But preventing genocide and mass atrocities is a collective responsibility.

And so, as we pay tribute to the victims and survivors of the genocide, we must renew our commitment. In 2005, the 192 governments of the United Nations renewed their commitment to the “responsibility to protect.” Canadian diplomats led the international community in mobilizing support for this emerging doctrine that seeks to break the cycle of choosing to look the other way when mass atrocities occur. Today, instead of standing on the sidelines, we urge the Prime Minister of Canada to enlarge this tradition by making mass atrocity prevention—the prevention of genocide, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing, in particular—a national security priority and a vital part of Canada’s foreign policy.

As retired Lieutenant-General and Senator Roméo Dallaire declares: “Where there is a will, there is a way. Let’s go!”

For further information please contact Frank Chalk at 514 983 95 9533), Kyle Matthews at 515 975 8160, or Marie Lamensch at 514 795 1284.