

Commemoration of Rwandan genocide focuses on prevention of future atrocities **Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation**

16 April 2013

Auschwitz Institute executive director Tibi Galis stressed the need for civil society to help governments protect their populations from genocide, at an event on Sunday marking the 19th anniversary of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, in which more than half a million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were slain by Hutu extremists in the space of just three months.

In his keynote speech to an audience that included Rwandan survivors, Galis said that as much as is known about the causes of genocide and the urgency of addressing them, most governments are still not prepared to prevent it. He noted the roots of today's efforts to prevent genocide in the failures to prevent the atrocities of the 1990s, specifically Rwanda, Srebrenica, and Kosovo. Explaining the origin of the Auschwitz Institute, whose programs date back to 2008, Galis said: "What we took away as an assumption is we expect our governments to do the right thing but without giving them the tools to do the right thing."

He pointed out that much of the current activity and attention when it comes to genocide prevention in the United States is still centered around what should more rightly be called "crisis management," as opposed to true prevention, which aims to keep violence from breaking out in the first place.

Sunday's event was organized by Rwandan genocide survivor Jacqueline Murekatete and the nonprofit MCW (Miracle Corners of the World). (...)

During a panel discussion with Murekatete and Jonathan Schienberg, an associate producer with "60 Minutes" on CBS News, Galis expanded on the themes he raised in his keynote, stating, "We don't need governments of heroes. We need bureaucrats who do the right thing — not because they believe in it, but because they have to."

Although the Auschwitz Institute works mainly with governments, Galis also highlighted the importance of civil society to ensuring societies are safe from genocide. "Vibrant civil society actors [offer] a chance to articulate problems and define solutions to them."

Asked by panel moderator Roberta Richin what individuals can do to help prevent genocide, Galis offered two recommendations: 1) "If we had a community where individuals don't look away when something wrong is happening in the community," and 2) for each individual to "put yourself at the service of prevention in what you are best at." Examples he gave were engaging

in dialogue with or persuading politicians, working to create a safe environment in one's own community, and creating economic models that take care of people's needs—things that most people don't call prevention but are essential nevertheless.

"Most of the time we prevent genocide and mass atrocities without even realizing it," Galis said. "At the same time, we need to do even better."

Read
[full article](#)

.