

# FAILURE OF THE MEDIA: RWANDA GENOCIDE AND THE RESPONSIBILITY TO REPORT

Arzoo Fatima SYEDDAH

Arzoo\_syeddah@hotmail.com

**Abstract:** *The 1994 genocide in Rwanda provides a telling case study of two quite separate roles for media in a conflict situation. The genocide was among the most appalling catastrophes of the 20th century, and media played a significant part both internally and internationally. What has been less explored is the role the international media may have played through lack of attention in facilitating or prolonging the genocide. While inside Rwanda the domestic media was being exploited by Hutu extremist conspirators, to spread the seeds of genocide among the local population. The local radios mobilized the Hutu majority, to coordinate the killings and to ensure that the plan for total extermination was faithfully executed. Ironically, the erratic international media coverage (after the genocide had occurred) largely conveyed the false notion of two 'tribes' of African 'savages' mindlessly slaughtering each other as they had done from time immemorial.*

*The Transitional justice network, as we know has been embroiled in trying to advocate and advance the theory of responsibility to protect among the global community. Considering the cases of Darfur and Iraq, the international community also has the responsibility to report of such atrocious war crimes and prevent 'never again' from ever happening. This paper will focus on how there is a fine line between freedom and license; and that freedom without responsibility is dangerous. In addition a free media in a culture that does not respect the rule of law and diversity of opinion can be a blueprint for disaster. The analysis will try to show how the media is an instrument that can be used for both positive and destructive ends, and be able to cite examples of both for future reference. Lastly, it will explore the problem of inadequate or even distorted international coverage of crises and conflicts in areas poorly understood by Western journalists.*

**Key Words:** *Ethnocide, extremist propaganda, Hate Media, Transitional Justice, War Crimes Tribunal.*

## MEDYANIN BAŞARISIZLIĞI: RUANDA SOYKIRIMI VE HABER SORUMLULUĞU

**Özet:** *1994 Ruanda soykırımı medya için iki farklı role sebep olmuştur. Medya bu soykırımında hem ulusal hem de uluslararası düzeyde çok önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Bu makalede medyanın hem olumlu hem de yıkıcı şekilde nasıl rol oynayabileceği gösterilmeye çalışılmıştır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Etnosid, aşırılık propagandası, nefret medyası, geçici adalet, savaş suçları mahkemesi*

### 1. Introduction

*“The press had become a weapon which was more dangerous than a machete. This weapon kills more people than machete”*

ICTR media trial witness<sup>1</sup>

Within the discipline of Transitional Justice one can never be too certain of what the future holds. Yet actions are taken, articles written, legal precedents created during the transitional process by policy makers to ensure if such a situation does arise in the future, historical evidence is there to assist towards a solution. Hence, anyone familiar with the trial of Julius Streicher in 1946 would have realized that his ghost would come back to haunt the infamous Trial of Hate Media in 2000, at the International Crime Tribunal for Rwanda.<sup>2</sup> One could imagine him sitting in the corner as the verdict was read out against Ferdinand Nahimana, Jean- Bosco Barayagwiza and Hassan Ngeze, finding them guilty of genocide, incitement to genocide and crimes against humanity.<sup>3</sup> Just like he had used the media as

1 See Raston-Temple, Dina, Justice on Grass: Three Rwandan Journalists. Their Trial for War Crimes, and a Nation's Quest for Redemption (Free Press 2005).

2 Julius Streicher (widely known as the Jew Baiter Number One) was a Nazi editor who went on trial at Nuremberg for using his racist magazine called 'The Attack' launching a smear campaign against the Jews and inciting the minds of Germans with anti-Semitism. Considered a vital part of the Nazi propaganda machine his newspaper was considered a serious misuse of the media under Hitler that eventually led to the extermination of the Jews. He was sentenced to death in 1946.

3 This was the first time the UN Genocide Convention (1948) has been used as a basis for a media trial. The defendants were the first trio of journalists to be accused of crimes against humanity since Julius Streicher.

## Failure of the Media: Rwanda Genocide and the Responsibility to Report

a dangerous political tool against the Jews, the three media executives mentioned above encouraged a 'war of media, words, newspapers and radio station' to wage a vitriolic campaign against the Tutsi and moderate Hutu population.<sup>4</sup> Nearly six decades later the media once again played a major role in manufacturing a conflict and eventual genocide that took place in Rwanda in the 1990's.<sup>5</sup>

Prosecutors charge that all three were part of a well-prepared plan to use their outlets first to spread ethnic hatred and then to persuade people to kill their enemies. That required demonizing the Tutsi, and it appears the media played its part brilliantly in accomplishing this. This paper will seek to analyze the use of media as a tool for political propaganda in Rwanda and how the Hutu radicals in power got away with just about anything. Furthermore I shall discuss how the global media was used as tool of indifference by western powers and media power houses while (in their view) trouble in Rwanda was a mere instance of murderous tribalism, unjustly associated with Africa.<sup>6</sup> Part 2 will deal with the brief historical context of Rwanda's political, social and economic forces that sowed the seeds for divisive politics along ethnic lines. I will endeavor to make a case of how past events aided the future of hate media to germinate and grow within the volatile political climate of Rwanda. Section 3 is dedicated to the savage ethnic cleansing of nearly 1 million Tutsis and Hutus within a span of hundred days by the Hutu elite and their complex yet highly organized web weaving through military and administrative hierarchies including 'self defense forces' such as the *Interahamwe* militia.<sup>7</sup> The Genocide was the most efficient and complete killing spree of modern times.

The following chapter picks upon hate media with Genocide being used as clear point of demarcation. I shall look at the development of the media *before* the genocide, the growth of it *during* the genocide and finally its progress *after* the Genocide under the new government. Issues discussed will include the exploitative press policies by the state to misuse the media - Radio-Television Libre Mille Collines (RTL) and Kangura for its own political ideological interests, a common feature throughout Rwandan history. One sub-section will shed light on the Media Trial and how its' final verdict had a huge impact

4 See <http://www.globalpolicy.org/intljustice/tribunals/rwanda/2003/1203media.htm>.

5 Ferdinand Nahimana and Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza, who the prosecutors say founded and controlled a Rwandan radio station and Hassan Ngeze who was a former newspaper publisher and editor.

6 French President Mitterrand was quoted as saying "In such countries, genocide is not too important..." by Philip Gourevitch in *Reversing the Reversals of War*, *The New Yorker*, 26 April 1999.

7 The term self defense was coined by Hutu Intellectuals to arouse the ethnic hatred in Hutus against the Tutsis. It was a propaganda tactic to imply that Hutus needed to arm and protect themselves against the enemy- playing on the historical injustices imposed by Tutsi elite. Such militias were deemed necessary to prevent the Tutsis from snatching power away from Hutus under the Arusha Accords.

on the questions of ethical journalism and media presence in vulnerable societies.

Section 5 is a brief overview of the concept of extremism and how it took root through dual phases of politicization of ethnicity and militarization of politics in Rwanda. Attempts will be made to show that propaganda and misinformation were used as instruments in the consolidation of extremist ideology giving rise to so called Hutu Power; and more importantly why did it succeed in a place like Rwanda where ethnic division was a product of colonialism. Section 6 sheds light on the rather elusive and prejudiced role of the global Media. This chapter is meant to show that politics was a major factor in determining the reaction of the rest of the world's media towards Rwanda during its darkest days. Chapter 7 tries to bring together all the questions raised throughout the paper such as at what point does political propaganda become criminal; can freedom of speech lead to genocide; what lessons are to be learnt from the Rwanda; and more importantly can ethical regulations be applied to modern day media. Final section will constitute of my personal reflections on this topic.

## 2. The Rwandan Context

Affectionately termed the *land of thousand hills*, Rwanda is a small country tucked away in Central Africa amidst big ones like Tanzania and Congo. The world had generally known little of this poor, rural inland state until it became the site of one of the bloodiest genocides ever known. Recount of history has always been malleable here, growing out of which version you get to hear- the Hutu or Tutsi version. It is in this story telling of '*that embellishment and exaggeration came the seeds of conflict*'.<sup>8</sup>

Linguistically and culturally, the population has been rather homogenous comprising of three groups: Hutu (80%), Twa (1%) and Tutsi (16%).<sup>9</sup> There is an interesting dichotomy of what has been constructed about the divide between the Hutu and the Tutsi, and what commonality existed between the two. They spoke the same Bantu language, practiced the same religion (Catholicism), had intermarried over the years, and as far any one could tell both arrived simultaneously in the mist clung hills of Rwanda. But it is human

8 Raston-Temple, Dina, Justice on Grass: Three Rwandan Journalists. Their Trial for War Crimes and a Nation's Quest for Redemption, (Free Press, 2005) pg. 17.

9 The Twa were traditional hunters in forest areas. The Tutsi were traditionally cattle breeders while the majority Hutu cultivated the soil.

## Failure of the Media: Rwanda Genocide and the Responsibility to Report

nature to focus on what sets us apart and in Rwanda it is said that often it was the taller, fair skinned Tutsi who were at the receiving end of Hutu aggressive resentment. The racial distinction was based on height, facial structure and skin color differences. Prior to independence the colonists gave preference to the more 'European looking' Tutsis and marginalized the Hutus. There were genealogical theories like Hamitic theory, arguing that Tutsis had migrated from Ethiopia therefore were not the real population of Rwanda and were foreign invaders. This hypothesis laid the foundation for racial stratification in Rwanda.

The highlands have long kept hostile tribes away so that Rwanda remained free of foreign influence until the advent of colonialism in the form of German and Belgium occupation. Although conflict had existed between the Hutu and Tutsis for many years, the '*notion of ethnic differences*' between the two groups can be seen as a construction of the Germans, cemented further by Belgians, introducing the ethnic identity cards- formally classifying the Rwandans as Tutsi, Hutu or Twa. These cards were used during the 1994 genocide to identify Tutsi individuals to be murdered. In other words '*it was the colonizers who took two people who had more in common than not and taught them to loathe each other*'.<sup>10</sup> Hence, under colonialism, a policy of 'ethnogenesis' was actively pursued, i.e. a politically-motivated creation of ethnic identities based on socially-constituted categories of the pre-colonial past. Simply put, the minority Tutsi became the haves and the majority Hutu the have-nots.

Hence the Tutsis were earmarked for leadership positions, educational and economic advantages over the oppressed Hutu who banded together and plotted their revenge. Tutsi hegemony was unquestionably more oppressive under Belgian rule than at any time prior to European colonization. By the end of World War II, also a growing number of colonial bureaucrats and missionaries had come to recognize the legitimacy of Hutu claims against the ruling Tutsi monarchy.<sup>11</sup> The culmination of Hutu bitterness (with substantial support from the trusteeship authorities) came in the form of the 1959-61 Hutu Revolution.

The so called Rwandan Rebellion was an event which would lay down foun-

---

10 Raston-Temple, Dina, Justice on Grass: Three Rwandan Journalists. Their Trial for War Crimes and a Nation's Quest for Redemption (Free Press 2005) pg. 17.

11 The Catholic Church being a huge presence in Rwanda started shifting its allegiance from the traditional Tutsi elite to the emerging class of educated Hutu people. Before the advent of the 1959 riots the Belgian had fallen out with the Tutsi. Scholars have recognized that ethnic conflict was aggravated by Belgian intervention in Rwanda politics and the subsequent crackdown on Tutsi.

dations for an ideologically driven identity called the Hutu Power. The Tutsis were summarily massacred by Hutu militias calling it as the ‘wind of the destruction’. This uprising liberated the Hutus; put them into power; made the Belgians switch support to the Hutu; and hereby begun a systemic process where Tutsis were excluded from all ranks of society.<sup>12</sup> After independence in 1961, under the new Hutu dominated republic (President Grégoire Kayibanda) common people were slowly prepared for the coming Genocide by scapegoating the Tutsi minority.<sup>13</sup>

The substitution of one political elite by another introduced a new dimension of political and social instability and a potential for future ethnic violence. The events of 1959-61 also forced tens of thousands of Tutsi into exile in neighboring states, from where groups of refugees began to carry out armed incursions into Rwanda, sowing the seeds of the country’s ethnically-defined refugee dilemma.

Economics and scarcity of resources also played a part in creating a situation ripe for strife. Rwanda has high population density and is an agrarian economy; therefore competition for land is high. Prior to the 1959 revolution, it was the Tutsi elite who owned most of the land. Once they were forced out of power and out of Rwanda (into neighboring countries of Uganda and Burundi) the Hutus took over the fertile land.<sup>14</sup> On the political level, Rwanda was endlessly tense. The political system was monopolized by the Hutu based party MDR (Mouvement Democratique Republicain) who retained support, through an efficient anti-Tutsi propaganda and discriminatory Hutu ideology. By capitalizing on Hutu fear of Tutsi revenge the governments of Kayibanda and Habyarimana injected hatred into society. This involved spreading fear by means of rumors, threats, lies, regular killings, including claims that the RPF (Rwandan Patriotic Front) was planning an invasion from its base in Burundi and murder the Hutu elite.<sup>15</sup>

12 The genocides against the Tutsis during 1959, 1963 and 1964 were a vengeful response to the political, cultural and social domination by the Tutsis that preceded the Hutu Revolution.

13 Day after day at every level of Rwandan society the seeds of distrust and hatred were sown. Hutu teachers would pick on Tutsi students in class and mock them. It seemed that Ethnicity came to trial the Tutsi minority like a tin can tied to the tail of a dog. See, Raston-Temple, Dina, and Justice on Grass: Three Rwandan Journalists. Their Trial for War Crimes and a Nation’s Quest for Redemption, (Free Press, 2005) chapter 1.

14 Agriculture dominates with coffee and tea accounting for 80% to 90% of exports.

15 The RPF is a political group comprised of children of Tutsis Rwandans who were forced to flee to Uganda after the 1959, 1963 and 1964 genocides. Disgruntled with the Hutu government they started carrying out small raids into Rwanda to put pressure on the Habyarimana to allow and undertake democratic transition that included all Rwandans. For further detail see Destexhe, Alain & Shaw cross William, Rwanda and the Genocide in the Twentieth Century, Pluto, 1995.

## Failure of the Media: Rwanda Genocide and the Responsibility to Report

The RPF, much to the government's annoyance gained increasing support during the 1990's due to its tolerant ideals.<sup>16</sup> President Habyarimana bowing to international pressure began negotiations that would allow Tutsi to join the government. The promising developments of the Arusha Accords were indeed a water shed to start the genocide preparations. The prospect of multiparty elections and power sharing with the Tutsi 'enemy' created severe anxiety for the extremist Hutu elements within the government. For them total annihilation of Tutsi in all its necessity was the sole solution to deal with this Tutsi problem. Hutu Power was about to manifest itself in the most barbaric way possible, defying any rational thought or imagination.

### 3. '*The Graves are not yet full*' (April- July 1994)

*'On the 3<sup>rd</sup>, the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> there will be a little something here in Kigali. And also on the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> you will hear the sounds bullets and grenades but I hope that the Rwandan armed forces are on the alert'.<sup>17</sup>*

RTLTM broadcast 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1994.

The broadcast was an ominous hint to what Hutu extremist elements within Habyarimana's government were planning to do to express their displeasure of the successful outcome to the Arusha Accords which they referred to as 'jokes'.<sup>18</sup> In their eyes one of their own, the President had betrayed the Hutu and it seemed that extremist ideology '*turned on and devoured its own leader*'.<sup>19</sup> On 6<sup>th</sup> April his aircraft was shot down by ground-to-air missile as it made its final approach into Kigali International airport. There was a sudden explosion with a high pitch screech of crumbling steel as the plane became a ball of fire. The assassination of the Hutu President in all its sense was the green signal for Rwandan Genocide to start. While the truth of shooting down the presidential plane has not yet been clearly established all fingers point to the extremist elements.<sup>20</sup> RTLTM was the first to report the incident and lay the

16 The RPF's view was that ethnic labels of Hutu and Tutsi were colonial legacies that should be discarded for the sake of a united and prosperous Rwanda.

17 Melvern, Linda, *Conspiracy to Murder: the Rwandan Genocide*. (London: Verso, 2004) pg. 126

18 Kakwenzire, Joan & Kamukama, Dixon "The Development and Consolidation of Extremist forces in Rwanda," in Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke, ed., *The Path of a Genocide: The Rwanda Crisis from Uganda to Zaire*. New Brunswick: (Transaction Publishers, 1999) pg. 79.

19 Kakwenzire, Joan & Kamukama, Dixon "The Development and Consolidation of Extremist forces in Rwanda," in Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke, ed., *The Path of a Genocide: The Rwanda Crisis from Uganda to Zaire*. New Brunswick: (Transaction Publishers, 1999) pg. 80.

20 The plane was also carrying the President of Burundi Cyprien Ntaryamiara. In recent years France has accused Paul Kagame head of the RPF and current President of Rwanda for the assassination.

blame on the RPF taking the first step towards the Tutsi extermination campaign. The announcement asked everyone to remain calm and inside their houses; which in fact was a clever strategy by the killers as this made people easy targets since they were found inside their houses.

Within hours of the crash the killings commenced, Hutu militia set up road-blocks where identity cards of all citizens were checked. All those identified as Tutsi were ruthlessly killed with machetes, grenades and guns. Militias carried house to house searches looking for Tutsis and moderate Hutus, sparing no one. Between April and July 1994 nearly a million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were butchered down.<sup>21</sup>

As mentioned afore, the Genocide was a strategically planned operation, effectively carried out because orders for the slaughter were passed down from the highest levels of military and administrative chain of command to the lowest level of armed youth like the notorious *Interahamwe* (those with a common goal) and *Impuzamugambi* (those with the same goal).<sup>22</sup> The former were sent into the rural areas to wipe out villages of its Tutsi occupants, urging ordinary people to join in with the killings. Alison De Forges said in her book that '*zeal for killing took on more significance than formal rank. Subordinates would prevail over their superiors...if they showed greater commitment to the genocide*'.<sup>23</sup> It is said that they came with fresh supplies of weapons to villages, going door to door so that the slaughter would have a continuous momentum to it. The aim of the organizers of the Genocide was for '*the entire Hutu populace to participate in the killing. That way the blood of Genocide would stain everybody and there would be no going back for them. Rwanda would become a community of killers*'.<sup>24</sup>

21 Reports differ as to the actual number of casualties. Estimates range from 500,000 to one million some eighty percent of the Tutsi population.

22 As part of an extremist ideology, for many months government forces had been recruiting young men who were unemployed and poor. It was easy for right wing parties like MRND and CDR to brainwash the youth and fashion them into a menacing force. They swaggered around the streets of Kigali all appetite and bravado; drunk and drugged waving their machetes and grenades around in the air. There were rumors that they were given free weapons by their political patrons for 'self defense'. The ranks of the Interahamwe and Impuzamugambi continued to swell as April 1994 drew closer. It seems that any sense of individual responsibility fell away as their numbers grew and killing became a game.

23 Raston-Temple, Dina, Justice on Grass: Three Rwandan Journalists. Their Trial for War Crimes and a Nation's Quest for Redemption, (Free Press, 2005) pg. 166.

24 Sarkin, Jeremy, The Necessity and Challenges of Establishing a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Rwanda, Vol 20 Human Rights Quarterly, (1999): p. 781



### 4. War of Words: Hate Media in Rwanda

Radio is the most effective medium in Africa, since poverty and illiteracy make television and newspapers inaccessible to most people. Consequently radio is considered the premier means of reaching the public with information. Rwanda has a long relationship with the radio, as it is one of the only states in which the government used radio to mould the opinions of its rural citizens. Frank Chalk in his work described the encouragement of ethnic hatred on the radio *'together with the creation and arming of militias [as] one of the clearest early warning signs of an imminent genocide'*.<sup>25</sup> By African standards, Rwandese enjoyed good access to the state radio, Radio Rwanda and RTLM. The BBC estimates that the median saturation of radios in sub-Saharan Africa in 1992 was about 13.5 per one hundred persons, while the radio ownership in Rwanda is about 25 per one hundred persons.<sup>26</sup>

#### 4.1. Media Before the Genocide

Radio Rwanda was the sole national radio station that had been broadcasting before independence. Until the creation of private hate radio-station RTLM, Radio Rwanda was the media having the biggest impact in Rwanda with its regional stations. The radio-station, built on a structured bureaucratic style was the government's voice and nobody dared to contest its authority.<sup>27</sup> It should be noted that after the RPF attacks began in late 1990, Radio Rwanda started broadcasting propaganda against the enemy. The government's false reports and communiqués were full of insults for the Tutsis, even when five of the radio-station's fifty journalists were Tutsi. Such broadcasting utilized ethnic lines to mobilize troops and ordinary citizens against the invaders. During the Arusha Accords negotiations, reports had to prove that cohabitation with Tutsis was impossible for the Hutu people.<sup>28</sup>

25 Chalk, Frank, "Hate Radio in Rwanda," in Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke, ed., *The Path of a Genocide: The Rwanda Crisis from Uganda to Zaire*. (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1999), pg. 94.

26 The United States Information Agency reports that RTLM's broadcasts of four hours per day were clearly heard in the Kigali area, and Reporter Sans frontières indicates that RTLM's programs were relayed to all parts of the country via a network of transmitters owned and operated by the government's Radio Rwanda. See Chalk, Frank, "Hate Radio in Rwanda," in Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke, ed., *The Path of a Genocide: The Rwanda Crisis from Uganda to Zaire*. (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1999).

27 For instance the entire news bulletin started with the speech by the President and all radio journalists were considered civil servants. The only music played was traditional Rwandan music.

28 Journalists who did not obey orders were pressed to resign. The rest of them tried to comply to keep their jobs.

This became a crucial issue when in 1992 Radio Rwanda's monopoly was broken by the RPF creation of Radio Muhabura broadcasting from Uganda. If Radio Rwanda was more or less MRND controlled, then Radio Muhabura was RPF controlled.<sup>29</sup>

The impact of television was very limited because only the rich elite had TV at that time. In terms of the written press there were a few publications in circulation by the government and the Rwandan Church. After the introduction of democratic reforms by Habyarimana, various opposition parties started printing their own publications.<sup>30</sup> But it was the emergence of the controversial Kangura, as we shall see later on that cemented the ethnic divide among the Rwandan people.

#### 4.2. Media During the Genocide

The rise of hate media and its subsequent radicalization reached its pinnacle during the Genocide but its beginnings lay a few years before. The emphasis of this section will be on right-wing media elements namely the newspaper Kangura (meaning wake it up) and the radio station RTLM. Kangura was created in 1990, to counteract the first real independent newspaper Kanguka.<sup>31</sup> The sole mission of Kangura under the charismatic founder and editor, Hassan Ngeze was to mobilize people around the president on the basis of an ethnic ideology excluding Tutsis. Hassan Ngeze, being neither intellectual nor a professional was all the easier to manipulate by the newspaper's promoters. He made possible to publish articles answering the new press which was becoming more and more critical towards the president. Kangura is famously known for publishing the Hutu Ten commandments, a bold manifesto which decreed that Hutus who interacted with Tutsis were traitors (see Annex). According to one Kenyan journalist '*people who might otherwise have ignored [the magazine] paid attention, because Kangura seemed to know what was going to happen before it did*'.<sup>32</sup> Under the patronage of Coalition pour la Defense de la Republique (CDR) it seemed that no one could touch Ngeze or his paper

29 Radio Muhabura, with its formal style could be listened all over Rwanda. While Radio Rwanda reported on RPF human rights abuses, Radio Muhabura returned the favor.

30 It is interesting to note that the explosion of the media almost corresponded to the first RPF attack on the Rwandan border. The war with RPF brought restriction on the media industry (thanks to the press-law of 1991) except those stations or publications that were already government owned. By suppressing independent media the government used its media channels to spread the seeds of the Genocide.

31 Kanguka (wake up) was created and supported by a rich powerful Tutsi businessman, denouncing corruption within the government. This was a major factor for the emergence of the Kangura.

32 [http://www.legalaffairs.org/issues/September-October-2002/feature\\_raston\\_sepoct2002.msp](http://www.legalaffairs.org/issues/September-October-2002/feature_raston_sepoct2002.msp).

## Failure of the Media: Rwanda Genocide and the Responsibility to Report

which now had boldly started to accuse moderate Hutus of inciting division.<sup>33</sup> It appeared that any Hutu who did not seem to share the same radical thinking manifested by CDR and Kangura was deemed a traitor. From mid 1991 the newspaper had a circulation of about ten thousand copies, printed free of charge. Surprisingly enough Kangura stopped publishing few weeks before the Genocide, but the damage had been done.

RTLM was created in April 1993, by Ferdinand Nahimana and CDR founder Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza as a reaction to the rebel radio Muhabura. Nahimana verified later that *'if Radio Muhabura was not doing this major propaganda ...and showing that the government and Rwanda was the one who was in the wrong, I think RTLM would not have been established'*.<sup>34</sup>

RTLM's main objective was to tell the 'truth', 'all the truth'. That fact was how the Arusha Accords was the worst possible punishment for the Hutus to share power with the greedy Tutsis. RTLM was an antidote to avoid this fate. The radio was a western style talk-show radio interactive with the audience-participation, lots of jokes and popular music. By this way RTLM was successful in getting the attention of the young; forming the majority of the militia members. The radio's easygoing attitude changed when Burundi President- a Hutu as reported was murdered by officers from the mainly Tutsi Burundian army. Suddenly RTLM changed its tone by name calling Tutsi *'inkotanyi'* (cockroaches), radicalizing its announcements and using events in Burundi to create panic. During the last few months prior to Genocide RTLM was busy inciting ethnic propaganda, mobilizing people for the last fight. With wide support from media colleague Kangura, the result was explosive.

After laying the blame on RPF for the President's death RTLM accused the Tutsis, moderate Hutus and even the Belgian UN peacekeepers.<sup>35</sup> From then on, RTLM broadcasts lasted 24 hours a day during the initial weeks of Genocide. The RTLM utilized extremist propaganda describing Tutsis as devils unable to control their impulse to kill; saying conventional warfare would not work. Extermination was the only solution as one broadcast stressed, *'who*

33 CDR was Rwanda's version of Ku Klux Klan with Barayagwiza as the leader. The party's ideology was blatantly fascist and it was constantly reminding Hutu majority that Tutsis were invaders who did not belong in their land. CDR was responsible for the recruiting and training of militia groups. The party had used extensive propaganda like Kangura to draw battle lines way before the Presidents assassination, suggesting that shooting down the plane was a pretext for violence that already had been planned.

34 Raston-Temple, Dina, Justice on Grass: Three Rwandan Journalists. Their Trial for War Crimes and a Nation's Quest for Redemption (Free Press, 2005), pg. 31.

35 RTLM picked on Gen. Romeo Dallaire, head of the UN peacekeepers in Rwanda accusing him of being a RPF supporter. No one was spared; even the Red Cross was targeted for sheltering only Tutsi people.

*is going to do the good work and help us [graves] fill completely. You cockroaches must know you are made of flesh. We will kill you!*<sup>36</sup>

Besides encouraging people to do their duty, RTL M played a more direct role in helping the slaughter. It advised *genocidaires* where to place roadblocks, identifying people who needed to be eliminated by announcing their address or car number plates on air. Furthermore, they invited people to come forward and give information on finding specific persons. This shows that people had been fed an unhealthy diet of an ideology based on ethnicity thanks to Kangura and RTL M. Ethnic emotions have often empowered a people collectively to perform acts of unbelievable brutality and savagery as exemplified in Rwanda.

### 4.3. Media after the Genocide: 16 Years on

When the RPF won the war in July 1994, over one million were dead and another two million had fled as refugees into the jungles of Congo. The national radio started broadcasting again but with a different tone- that of unity and reconciliation. Since it was a widely known fact that the Genocide was largely the result of venomous propaganda by media, the RPF led government was now largely cautious. At the same time, one must not forget that the extremist Hutu journalists were still carrying out propaganda to incite ethnic hatred while based in Congo.<sup>37</sup> This has led to an urgency felt in the current government as it had gradually become more radical in its reaction towards the home media. Nowadays there exists tight state control over the media, even though several privately-owned radio stations have now received licenses to compete with the government-owned Radio Rwanda. The reconstruction of the press post-Genocide started with efforts aimed at reconciliation and unity, but was soon replaced by an absence of pluralism and pressures by the government. For instance some topics are forbidden such as Rwanda's army in Congo, 1994 Genocide or the abuses committed by RPF. When the government does not like something in the press the concept of genocide is used as a weapon to silence the critics. As one journalist added '*survivors look at media, as traitors, genociders; killers consider that media is controlled by and [is] part of the government, so journalists who did not have a role in the genocide stay shy and censor themselves*'.<sup>38</sup>

36 Chalk, Frank, "Hate Radio in Rwanda," in Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke, ed., *The Path of a Genocide: The Rwanda Crisis from Uganda to Zaire*. (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1999), pg. 98.

37 Furthermore, the disgruntled militia men and former armed forces regrouped and started carrying out across the border skirmishes.

38 See Monique Alexis report on <http://www.i-m-s.dk/files/publications/Rwanda%20media%20experience%20Report%20June03.pdf>.

## Failure of the Media: Rwanda Genocide and the Responsibility to Report

The RPF government has also passed a media law that ironically looks similar to the regulation that allowed Kangura and RTLM to flourish. According to the officials at Ministry of Information they are better prepared now to leap on any outlet (mostly independent press) that might '*wield the media as a weapon of war again*'.<sup>39</sup>

### 4.4. Media Trial at Arusha

*'Without firearm, machete, or any physical weapon, you caused the death of thousands of innocent civilians....Your power to save was more matched by your power to kill'*.

Media Verdict 2003<sup>40</sup>

A collective guilt and confusion hung over Rwanda and the world, as the killings slowed down and the international community picked up the courage to utter the word genocide. The most important step towards reconciliation was to ensure providing justice and retribution to the victims. Therefore, the idea of setting up an International Tribunal and trying the main perpetrators floated in the corridors of United Nations; culminating in the creation of the Court in Arusha, Tanzania. It appeared that the international community wanted to take action to somehow appease its guilty conscience of not doing enough to halt the mass murders. Dina Raston wrote that the world needed to find the masterminds of the 1994 Genocide guilty so that '*Rwandans and Africans more generally, would believe in the genuineness of the world's outrage. What was unspoken was that Rwanda had suffered wrongs in 1994 for which no court could ever adequately compensate*'.<sup>41</sup>

The trial of Ferdinand Nahimana (intellectual priest of Hutu Supremacy), Hassan Ngeze (the venomous vulgarian) and Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza (master manipulator of truth both at home and abroad) traced the fall and rise of the three media executives who abused their positions of power, intellect and propaganda skills to incite hatred into the minds of thousands of ordinary Rwandans. The trial raised crucial questions such as at what point did politi-

39 Raston-Temple, Dina, *Justice on Grass: Three Rwandan Journalists. Their Trial for War Crimes and a Nation's Quest for Redemption* (Free Press, 2005), pg. 249.

40 Raston-Temple, Dina, *Justice on Grass: Three Rwandan Journalists. Their Trial for War Crimes and a Nation's Quest for Redemption*, (Free Press, 2005), pg. 237.

41 Raston-Temple, Dina, *Justice on Grass: Three Rwandan Journalists. Their Trial for War Crimes and a Nation's Quest for Redemption* (Free Press, 2005), pg. 74.

cal propaganda became criminal. For the first time since Streicher's trial at Nuremberg, the tribunal had to decide and draw a line where press freedom ended and incitement started. The trial was to prove that the 'trio' was responsible for what was broadcast or printed and that genocide was part of their overall strategy. After three years, in August 2003, the tribunal charged them with genocide, incitement to genocide, and crimes against humanity, before and during the period of the genocide of 1994.<sup>42</sup> It was established that RTLM and Kangura did not act alone to incite the genocide but constituted an integral component of coordinated and well planned efforts to encourage attacks on Tutsis with intention of eliminating them as a group. As one witness put it, '*what RTLM did was pour petrol, to spread petrol throughout the country little by little, so that one day it would be able to set fire to the whole country*'.<sup>43</sup> The judges agreed. Their decision was legally daring and, in spite of its length, not fully elaborated. But it was correct.

The verdict looked to Europe where lawmakers- leaden with Holocaust memories, say that it is safer to curb some speech than to provide the hate movement with a chance to gain any momentum. The verdict further proved that RTLM and Kangura held some sort of blinding authority over the audience; as they knew how to make people obey them through airwaves with the same alacrity with which they obeyed orders spoken by leaders.<sup>44</sup> It seems a provocative media campaign relies on the receptiveness of people for success. And that success is magnified when a culture of total obedience permeates all levels of a vulnerable society.

### 5. Use of Extremist Propaganda

It appears that extremism had been a constant presence in Rwanda, as a way to keep the political divisiveness. Parties like MRND and CDR were essentially extremist in nature, citing the Hutu Revolution of 1959 as their source of inspiration. Furthermore Habyarimana saw extremism (Hutu Power theory) as a way to consolidate power among the people.<sup>45</sup> It was a way to curb the emer-

42 On 3 December 2003, the court found all three defendants guilty and sentenced Nahimana and Ngeze to life imprisonment and Barayagwiza to imprisonment for 35 years. The case is currently on appeal.

43 Raston-Temple, Dina, Justice on Grass: Three Rwandan Journalists. Their Trial for War Crimes and a Nation's Quest for Redemption, (Free Press, 2005), pg. 146.

44 The communities around Rwanda were so successfully divided, subdivided and hierarchical that they were easily mobilized. The people were of the herd; they listened to those in authority with bovine obedience.

45 The methods by Habyarimana were used to exclude any opposition to his monolithic regime. As a leader he had many followers who believed in him and whatever he said. His followers had actually given him the title of UMUBYEYI- which means the parent, the provider and the one above everything. This kind of belief in an individual is highly dangerous.

## Failure of the Media: Rwanda Genocide and the Responsibility to Report

gence of opposition parties, control growing power of the RPF under the Arusha accords and in the process remove any challenge to the '*repressive and choking decades of old authority of the MRND*'.<sup>46</sup> Supporters of the regime were not ready to let any new challenges to their authority go unchecked, preparing the ground for the institutionalism of extremism through propaganda, misinformation, intimidation, assassination, politicization of ethnicity, indoctrination and the militarization of politics. In all the areas, mentioned above media played an integral part. The main underlying theme was that Tutsis were the 'enemy' who needed to be dealt with. In 1992 a commission set up by the Rwanda government, tried to define the real enemy as '*Tutsi inside or outside Rwanda who are extremist and nostalgic for power...who want to take power by force*'.<sup>47</sup> Ironically, the Hutu had also accused the Tutsi of extremist tendencies, in order to legitimize their message of extremism across to the public.

### 5.1. Basic Traits of Hate Media

Here under are mentioned some of the basic characteristics of hate media that were used in inciting hatred in Rwanda.

1. First, the presence of a strong ideology that served as the main driving force. Nahimana had developed his Hutu power ideology (in his doctoral thesis in Paris) and had set about to implement it through establishing RTLM. He had paid attention to the 'overlords' image of ancient Tutsi kings and how the 1959 revolution had led to downfall of them, and emergence of Hutu supremacy. Therefore, the Hutus' dominance was just fair democracy. The RPF attacks were considered as a Tutsi-attempt to conquer Rwanda and annihilate Hutu. Consequently if the Hutus wanted to survive they had to exterminate the Tutsis in the name of 'self defense'.
2. Second, the urge to control the media and populism. By a clever use of propaganda the Hutu extremists managed to portray the Tutsi as 'outsiders' who did not belong in Rwanda. This otherness factor was the beginning of sowing seeds of hatred. Biased journalism was

46 Kakwenzire, Joan & Kamukama, Dixon "The Development and Consolidation of Extremist forces in Rwanda," in Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke, ed., *The Path of a Genocide: The Rwanda Crisis from Uganda to Zaire*. (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1999), pg. 70.

47 Kakwenzire, Joan & Kamukama, Dixon "The Development and Consolidation of Extremist forces in Rwanda," in Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke, ed., *The Path of a Genocide: The Rwanda Crisis from Uganda to Zaire* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1999), pg. 74.

used for denigration of the Tutsi- through Kangura and RTLM who used scape-goating, threats, name calling, band wagon (*us vs. them*), among other things to get the message across. Furthermore they comported with the *de-individualization* aspect of the enemy image- anyone who belonged to a given group had the same beliefs and behaved the same way. As a result all people [Tutsi] were the enemy.

3. Third, the psychological preparation to hate, so the Hutu could kill easily when called to do so. This was a classic case of brain washing leading to ethnic cleansing where due to total obedience of the people; the government by misusing of the media was able to carry out its plan. By a three step operation of misinforming the mass, sowing fear in their minds and finally dehumanizing the Tutsi into 'snakes' and 'cockroaches', the Genocide was able to occur in a cold blooded and organized fashion. Whereas the extermination of the Jews had taken nine years from start to finish, '*by comparison, the Hutu leaders went from stage one to stage four within a few weeks*'.<sup>48</sup>
4. Fourth, the ruthless invasion of violence in all aspects of propaganda. Language had degenerated to a point where, abuse, name calling and killings seemed a normal part of life.<sup>49</sup> For the youth militia there was an overt absence of guilt in what they were told to do and what they did. The politicization of ethnicity had occurred at such a rapid and organized pace that when they were handed out free arms for so-called self defense they took it on its face value. They were told to believe that violence was the only way to deal with 'ethnic' dilemma.

Propaganda can be a tool for exclusion and inclusion and events in Rwanda show that by the use of media, both processes operated at the same time to underscore the difference between *us* and *them*. Hate speech is an extreme version of the use of this distinction between *us* and *them* and can be refined to a point where it can lead to mass murder like in Yugoslavia or Rwanda.

---

48 Raston-Temple, Dina, Justice on Grass: Three Rwandan Journalists. Their Trial for War Crimes and a Nation's Quest for Redemption (Free Press, 2005), pg. 103.

49 Certain words were used repeatedly during the months prior to the Genocide, thus making them popular and vocabulary of ensuing genocide. RTLM and Kangura popularized words like *kurimbura* (to massacre), *kumara* (to eat up), *gutsembatsemba* (to exterminate), *gutikiza* (to clean), and *gutema* (to cut). For more details see, Kimani, Mary, "RTLM: The Medium That Became A Tool For Mass Murder" in *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, ed. Allan Thompson. (London: Pluto Press, 2007), pg. 110.



### 5.2. Why is it Successful?

Now the question is why was hate-media so successful in a small country like Rwanda? It is well known that Rwandan media was controlled, backed and financed by a small number of powerful and influential politicians, also known as Akazu- a name given to the presidential family and his close allies.<sup>50</sup> There existed no institutional framework in Rwanda to counteract, stop or even sanction hate media supported by men in key positions in government, so this rendered the media uncontrollable. As the Rwandan population only had access to Radio Rwanda and the RTLM, they were easy victims of biased news eventually becoming eager killers. In the absence of any ethical code of conduct for journalists people like Hassan Ngeze were prone to manipulation and political motivation to propagate Hutu hate ideology. There was no obligation and social responsibility for journalists to report on the truth and be objective in their work.

### 6. International Media- Case of Misinterpretation and Misreporting

*“The media like so many others in Rwanda, failed. The world powers failed. Individually we failed”* <sup>51</sup>

Gen. Romeo Dallaire

The central contention- that local hate media fomented the Genocide and international media essentially facilitated the process by turning their backs- is the crux of this section. It is a well known fact that most international news stations initially misunderstood the exact nature of the killing in Rwanda. There existed a habitual racist portrayal of African strife as atavistic tribal savagery, and Genocide was not considered part of the problem. The implications of using the ‘G’ word were enormous in terms of political action and no one wanted to take that first step.<sup>52</sup> Sadly much of the international coverage focused on the scramble to evacuate expatriates from Kigali and so when in

50 Among the list of shareholders of RTLM included the President Habyarimana, hence making RTLM a very successful creation with powerful patrons. Hutu genocidaires believed that RTLM and Kangura (freedom of speech) were part of democratization efforts carried out by the government. See, Melvern, Linda, *Conspiracy to Murder: the Rwandan Genocide*. (London: Verso, 2004), pg. 56.

51 Dallaire, Romeo, “The Media Dichotomy” in *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, ed. Allan Thompson. (London: Pluto Press, 2007), pg. 14.

52 The NGO’s were first to use the term genocide but it still took weeks for the international media and states to recognize the impact of the term. The term came into common usage when the UN Committee for Human Rights adopted a resolution in May 1994 acknowledging that genocide was being perpetrated in Rwanda. Using the word would have necessitated intervention under the Genocide Convention.

mid April 1994 the slaughter increased, the volume of reports in relation declined. By that time, most journalists had left along with the evacuees leaving Rwanda in the Devil's hands. Ultimately international media reports were replete with images of bloated corpses, strewn on the roadside, gnawed by wild dogs or choking the rivers. As there were very few journalists on the ground during the actual genocide, there exist very few images of the heinous crime itself. The so-called dichotomy of media in Rwanda can be related to a sort of Heisenberg effect according to Canadian journalist Alan Thompson in his work on role of media in Rwanda.<sup>53</sup> He argues that journalists could have made an impact in Rwanda if they had carried out more comprehensive and accurate reporting about the Genocide. Instead, the lack of proper media attention contributed to an inverse Heisenberg effect- whereby through the absence of foreign media actually contributed to the attitude of the *genocidaires*. In simple words the perpetrators '*were encouraged by the world's apathy and acted with impunity*'.<sup>54</sup>

Samantha Power in her article 'Bystanders to Genocide' adds that simultaneous events of war and Genocide, combined with reports and lies of Rwandan government confused policy makers and media. As the western media was '*psychologically and imaginatively too limited*', the concept of savage ethnic fighting became entrenched in the minds of foreign media. It was something that was simple to report and easy to digest.<sup>55</sup> '*Western media blame the international community for not intervening rapidly, but the media must share equal blame for not immediately recognizing the extent of the carnage and mobilizing world attention to it*' claims Alan Kuperman.<sup>56</sup> They failed to report that a nationwide killing campaign was under way in Rwanda until almost three weeks into the violence. By that time, some 250,000 Tutsi had already been massacred. Sadly, media really began to pay attention once Hutu refugees (*genocidaires*) began to pour out of Rwanda. It was the 'humanitarian melodrama of Goma' that finally garnered the full attention of the global media. The Rwanda Genocide was a media event without a doubt, yet it never graduated to the rank of a mega event. This was ironic for the media is meant to be impartial in its findings, investigate the truth and portray just that in its starkest sense.

53 The Heisenberg effect named for German physicist Werner Heisenberg describes how the act of observing a particle actually changes the behavior of that particle, its velocity or direction.

54 Allan Thompson, 'Introduction' in *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, ed. Allan Thompson. (London: Pluto Press, 2007), pg. 3.

55 Samantha Power, Bystanders to Genocide, 2001, at 4. <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200109/power-genocide/4>

56 Kuperman, Alan, 'How the Media Missed the Rwanda Genocide', in *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, ed. Allan Thompson. (London: Pluto Press, 2007), pg. 256.

## Failure of the Media: Rwanda Genocide and the Responsibility to Report

It was the 'lack of focused, persistent media coverage of events in Rwanda [that] only served to help the cause of foot draggers [Western powers] who did not want to get involved'.<sup>57</sup> The role of international media is closely intertwined with political games played in the corridors of United Nations in New York. Their inability to act and intervene essentially paralyzed the work of the United Nations as world powers assembled in Security Council choose 'to reduce rather than enhance their [UNAMIR] presence'.<sup>58</sup> Dallaire's constant pleas such as the 11<sup>th</sup> January cable, for reinforcement fell on deaf ears, as he watched organized extermination surround the UN peacekeepers. Instead the Security Council sought to reduce the number of peacekeepers, urging Dallaire to evacuate. Belgium's contingent had already left after the massacre of ten of its peacekeepers in the initial days of the Genocide.<sup>59</sup> The lives of UN peacekeepers were more precious to the western community, after America's debacle in Somalia.

U.S had expected to play a major role in the post-cold world order and had been active in peacekeeping missions like Bosnia, but due to the 'Somalia fatigue' syndrome did not want to get involved at all in Rwanda where the people simply didn't count.<sup>60</sup> There were reports that the Administration was not aware of the killings. But declassified government documents show that several senior United States officials were aware of the dimensions of the genocide in Rwanda in early 1994, even as some sought ways to avoid getting involved. The killings were mere abstractions for policy makers in Washington D.C combined with systemic discouragement by major US newspapers to intervene. Even when the Clinton Administration lamented the killings, it urged for negotiations between the warring parties, because essentially Rwanda had no strategic value for the US government.<sup>61</sup> The US even refused a request for help to jam the broadcasts of RTLM as it was deemed to be an ineffective and expensive mechanism. President Clinton stressed in clear

---

57 Allan Thompson, 'Introduction' in *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, ed. Allan Thompson. (London: Pluto Press, 2007), pg. 4

58 Gerry Caplan, Rwanda: The Preventable Genocide, Report for Organization of African Unity's International Panel of Eminent Personalities, (July 2000), pg. 64.

59 United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) was set up to help Rwanda in the transitional phase following the Arusha Accords agreement. The mission was to oversee the peaceful transfer of power to the new government. Sadly UNAMIR, under General Romeo Dallaire was ill equipped and badly informed about the deteriorating situation in Rwanda from the start. The UNAMIR has received much attention for its role, or lack thereof due to the limitations of its rules of engagement, in the Rwandan Genocide and outbreak of fighting. It was considered a major peacekeeping failure.

60 The American experience in Mogadishu in Oct, 1993 significantly changed the will of the Western world to commit itself to the betterment of the developing world. 18 American soldiers were killed by Somali rebels thus discouraging the US to intervene in future operations.

61 Official administration policy, as expressed in mid-May after the military's role in killing hundreds of thousands was abundantly clear, is that the U.S. wants "both sides" to stop the fighting.

terms that America could not be the policeman of the world as '*our interests are not sufficiently at stake in so many of them to justify a commitment of our folks*'.<sup>62</sup>

France being a francophone member of the Security Council and ardent big supporter of Hutu regime stayed quiet during the Genocide. It played a huge part in leading UN to aid and abet the killings. Dallaire angrily commented later that '*no amount of its cash and aid will ever wash its hands clean of Rwandan blood*'.<sup>63</sup> France's policies towards Rwanda had the usual Franco-African relationship framework- providing diplomatic and military support to a dictatorial regime, training of government armed forces cemented by patrimonial relationships between leaders. France was an active presence during the Arusha peace process under its 'soft track' approach but that all changed after the President's plane was shot down. Reports surfaced that French troops stationed in Kigali were indeed helping *genocidaires* in fighting the RPF. It appeared that French intervention now suddenly extended to Rwandan 'internal security' matters. Nonetheless, there was field reporting only when French troops landed in Kigali to rescue its' citizens including Rwandan officials belonging from the slain President's Akazu mafia.

Consequently, after evacuation France simply turned a blind eye and deaf ear to the multiple signs of a coming genocide emerging from the Hutu government.<sup>64</sup> Only when France, under Operation Turquoise created triangular safe zones (south-west Rwanda) after July 1994, did the media return and the result was '*that the reality of genocide was, once again, submerged into too much information*' of cholera and refugee camps in Goma.<sup>65</sup>

Sanctimony [of national interest] has been challenged in regard to Bosnia, where persistent media reports pinpointed victim and aggressor—and spurred the Clinton Administration to at least go through the motions of succoring the embattled Muslims. But, when it came to Africa, Romeo Dallaire declared '*why is that the black Africans, sitting there being slaughtered by the thousands get nothing? Why is it when a bunch of white Europeans get slaughtered*

62 Dallaire, Romeo, "The Media Dichotomy" in *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, ed. Allan Thompson. (London: Pluto Press, 2007).

63 Melvern, Linda, *Conspiracy to Murder: the Rwandan Genocide*. (London: Verso, 2004), pg. 219.

64 France appeared to be the only country that had regular contact with CDR and one version is that French military presence in Rwanda contributed to the development of the extremist strategies. It can be the case that there was an acceptance of Hutu power among the French bureaucracy. One is prone to ask that if the government had taken steps to remove pro- Hutu elements it could perhaps have limited the killings.

65 Chaon, Anne, "Who Failed in Rwanda, Journalists or the Media?" in *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, ed. Allan Thompson. (London: Pluto Press, 2007), pg. 164.

## Failure of the Media: Rwanda Genocide and the Responsibility to Report

*in Yugoslavia you can't put enough capability in there?*<sup>66</sup> The role of the international media in Rwanda in comparison to Yugoslavia Genocide was almost pathetic. Yugoslavia had received military help and immense media coverage but in Rwanda it was just tribal strife- '*Rwanda was black. Yugoslavia was white European*'.<sup>67</sup>

The media houses had chosen to look away and instead not fill the foreign policy vacuum. If there is anything worse than the Genocide itself, it is the knowledge that it did not happen. There were some reporters present in the thick of Genocide reporting on killings like BBC's Mark Doyle but their information was lost in negligent broadcasting. In this case one may think that the media is to be blamed but maybe not all the journalists. Anne Chaon in her article stresses that field reporters tried in their best capacity to keep the world aware of blood bath in Rwanda, but at the end of the day it was media editors sitting in New York or London that chose not to broadcast fully the horrifying reports.<sup>68</sup> The media moguls did not think it was profitable to report on killings somewhere in Africa when the world would be more interested in O.J Simpson's trial or advent of multiracial elections in South Africa. This variation on the "they-all-look-alike" theme, and the media's comfortable acceptance of the western power's "even-handed" policy, showed that to the global news elites, Africa and Africans' sufferings didn't amount to a hill of beans...or a stack of bodies.

### 7. Responsibility to Report

So what does misuse of Rwandan media and scant use of global media outside tell the reader? What role media can play with in societies? Domestic and foreign media are intrinsically linked as they both affect the momentum and nature of one another. The reaction of one is the reflection of the other party, what Senator Dallaire refers to as the dichotomy of media. The media verdict set up a precedent in drawing a fine line between press freedom and hate speech but furthermore it sought to remind us that there is indeed an ethical dimension within journalism- *Responsibility to Report*. If the media is left unchecked in a country, whose history is checkered with ethnic tension and political strife than what starts as an innocent project can easily descend into a virulent voice for

66 <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ghosts/interviews/dallaire.html>.

67 Dallaire, Romeo, "The Media Dichotomy" in *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, ed. Allan Thompson. (London: Pluto Press, 2007), pg. 13.

68 Chaon, Anne, "Who Failed in Rwanda, Journalists or the Media?" in *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, ed. Allan Thompson. (London: Pluto Press, 2007), pg. 162.

hate propaganda. In this case broadcasts constituted to such dangerous levels that it acted like a potent drug for people to go and spill blood.

The verdict was a definitive legacy of the Streicher trial; a fresh case to reinforce that media can be easily manipulated by state actors, combatants and private agencies in conflict situations. Judge Pillay when issuing the verdict said '*press freedom comes with responsibility. The press is supposed to hold a position of public trust. It is supposed to maintain a critical distance. They [defendants] did not*'.<sup>69</sup> RTLM and Kangura betrayed the public trust by inciting resentment and divisiveness between Rwandans; and international media deceived the Tutsi victims who had trusted it to inform the world. No one answered Rwanda's call of desperation those three months.

Journalists and their respective media houses are expected to report without bias, inaccuracy and neglect- both within the domestic and global domains. British journalist Martin Bell has spoken about journalism with attachment- a call for empathy with humanity among reporters but surely journalists can report on people and places that are excluded from mainstream news agenda.<sup>70</sup> When one wants to report on a fractured society such as Rwanda it is crucial that journalists must do everything possible to piece together the real story for the readers. That means having the background knowledge of the place and its people. Most of the reporters were not well versed in Rwandan history and therefore could not comprehend the extremity of the situation. Journalists can make a difference, through their reporting even if media organizations or governments are unwilling to fully exercise their role.

Sadly there are still lessons to be learnt from Rwanda for stories from Africa, such as Darfur continued to be downplayed. Media needs to set aside the prejudiced lens aimed at Africa and stay dynamic in the search for truth. Constant in-depth reporting will have an impact in challenging war propaganda and speeches in future around the world. Initiatives should be encouraged in radio countries where media can be used for peace and security, for instance as is the case in Sierra Leone and Somalia.<sup>71</sup> Private radio stations like Radio

69 Raston-Temple, Dina, Justice on Grass: Three Rwandan Journalists. Their Trial for War Crimes and a Nation's Quest for Redemption. (Free Press, 2005), pg. 198.

70 See, Thompson, Allan, "Responsibility to Protect: A new Journalistic Paradigm" in *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, ed. Allan Thompson. (London: Pluto Press, 2007).

71 In Somalia the Islamist insurgents have used radio to exacerbate society along religious and tribal lines. Western states and media have imposed labels of 'warlords' and 'Islamists' to make sense of the conflict, similar to the Tutsi and Hutu definitions propagandized in Rwanda. In Sierra Leone, radio was used a medium of miscommunication by militia leaders to incite violence. After the peace agreement in 1999 there have been efforts (both by U.N and private companies) to set up radio stations urging peace and reconciliation.

## Failure of the Media: Rwanda Genocide and the Responsibility to Report

Galkayo, supported by Oxfam Canada seeks to promote reconciliation and peace while sharing information in the Puntland area of Somalia.

### 8. Reflections

Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka observed that Rwanda is clinically dead as a nation. The psychic damage of the country is so deep that it still remains haunted by the role RTLM played in the 100 days bloodbath. Before the Rwandan media was abused to justify genocide, today the genocide justifies the abuse of the media. Rwandan history is witness to the media equation-domestic authorities can use the role of the media during conflict to stretch limits of freedom of expression; and international media's reaction can alter the momentum and nature of the conflict. The propaganda of misinforming people and transforming them into killers reflected the authority of local media. The Rwanda episode gave a whole new meaning to how wars were not fought for territory but for words, setting a dark precedent for media misuse.

Ironically we tend to forget that hate media is established and supported by those in power; now RPF tries to control and harass the media if they are critical of the government reminiscent of days of MRND rule.<sup>72</sup> President Kagame has encouraged people not to talk about ethnicity or the continuing RPF insurgency against Hutu rebels in Congo. In his eyes the shadow of ethnicity will go away if people would just stop talking about it. When Genocide is mentioned publically one tends to hear the Tutsi version. Lack of media and its abuse is a recipe for disaster in vulnerable societies like Rwanda, regardless of how well the intention of the media might be. Whether it is independent or state owned, a constrained medium of communication can easily be manipulated by certain groups. Having monopoly over what you want people to hear and therefore influence their thought process led to the 1994 Genocide. Radio continues to play an important role in Rwanda but media solely dominated by radio is a dangerous concept. Now Hutus view the radio as Tutsi propaganda and for Tutsis the radio is a chilling reminder of how words can kill thousands. There still exists lack of diverse media sources, harassment of independent journalists and absence of a legal framework with safeguards against future violations of recognized norms for media activity. Reporters San Frontieres' 2008 worldwide press freedom index placed Rwanda at 145<sup>th</sup> place out of total 173 countries measured.<sup>73</sup>

72 There has been a subtle wielding of the concept of genocide as a weapon to silence the critics and exiled enemies.

73 [http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id\\_article=29031](http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=29031).

Accordingly there needs to be germination of independent and impartial press in Rwanda where the media acts as the conscience of humanity and not a weapon of propaganda. Having faced numerous tragedies in history and in pursuit of peace there is a local saying 'if you survived a tragedy you should speak about it'. Rwandans need to speak openly of events they have witnessed through the media and face the collective amnesia gripping Rwanda. Only then will ordinary Rwandans see the enemy as neighbors, friends and fellow countryman. That would be the first step towards healing Rwandan society and achieving Tutsi- Hutu reconciliation.

### Bibliography

#### Books

Chalk, Frank, "Hate Radio in Rwanda," in Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke, ed., *The Path of a Genocide: The Rwanda Crisis from Uganda to Zaire*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1999.

Livingston, Steven & Eachus, Todd, "Rwanda: U.S Policy and Television Coverage," in Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke, ed., *The Path of a Genocide: The Rwanda Crisis from Uganda to Zaire*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1999.

Kakwenzire, Joan & Kamukama, Dixon "The Development and Consolidation of Extremist forces in Rwanda," in Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke, ed., *The Path of a Genocide: The Rwanda Crisis from Uganda to Zaire*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1999.

Chaon, Anne, "Who Failed in Rwanda, Journalists or the Media?" in *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, ed. Allan Thompson. London: Pluto Press, 2007.

Dallaire, Romeo, "The Media Dichotomy" in *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, ed. Allan Thompson. London: Pluto Press, 2007.

Kimani, Mary, "RTL: The Medium That Became A Tool For Mass Murder" in *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, ed. Allan Thompson. London: Pluto Press, 2007.

Alozie, Emmanuel, "What Did They Say? Africa Media Coverage of the First



## Failure of the Media: Rwanda Genocide and the Responsibility to Report

100 Days of the Rwanda Crisis” in *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, ed. Allan Thompson. London: Pluto Press, 2007.

Kuperman, Alan, ‘How the Media Missed the Rwanda Genocide’, in *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, ed. Allan Thompson. London: Pluto Press, 2007.

Giles, Tom, “Media Failure over Rwanda’s Genocide” in *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, ed. Allan Thompson. London: Pluto Press, 2007.

Thompson, Allan, “Responsibility to Protect: A new Journalistic Paradigm” in *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, ed. Allan Thompson. London: Pluto Press, 2007.

Chalk, Frank, “Intervening to Prevent Genocidal Violence: the Role of the Media” in *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, ed. Allan Thompson. London: Pluto Press, 2007.

Cohen, Jared, *One Hundred Days of Silence: America and the Rwanda Genocide*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007

Melvorn, Linda, *Conspiracy to Murder: the Rwandan Genocide*. London: Verso, 2004.

Raston-Temple, Dina, *Justice on Grass: Three Rwandan Journalists. Their Trial for War Crimes and a Nation’s Quest for Redemption*, Free Press, 2005.

Cohen Richard, “Tribalism: The Human Heart of Darkness,” *Washington Post*, April 19, 1994.

Shaw, Martin, ‘What is Genocide?’, Polity Press, 2007.

Semujanga, Josias, *Origins of the Rwandan Genocide*, Humanity, 2003.

Gerard, Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide*, C Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd, 1998.

Destexhe, Alain & Shawcross William, *Rwanda and the Genocide in the Twentieth Century*, Pluto, 1995.

Gourevitch, Phillip, *We Wish To Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda*, Picador, 1999.

African Rights, Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance, (rev. ed. 1995).

Shaharyar M. Khan, *The Shallow Graves of Rwanda*, I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2000.

### **Journals**

Sarkin, Jeremy, *The Necessity and Challenges of Establishing a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Rwanda*, 20 *Human Rights Quarterly*, 1999.

Sarkin, Jeremy, *The Tension Between Justice And Reconciliation n Rwanda: Politics, Human Rights, Due Process and the Role of the Gacaca Courts in Dealing with the Genocide'*, 45:2. *Journal of African Law*, 2001.

Sarkin, Jeremy, *Achieving Reconciliation in Divided Societies: Comparing Approaches in Timor Leste, South Africa and Rwanda*, *Yale Journal of International Affairs*, Summer 2008.

Moghalu, Kingsley, *Image and Reality of War Crimes Justice: External Perceptions of International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda*, 26:2 *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, 2002.

### **Papers**

Gulseth, Hege, *The Use of Propaganda in the Rwanda Genocide: A Study of Radio-Television Libre des Mille Collines*, Doctoral Thesis, University of Oslo, May 2004. Accessed at <http://www.duo.uio.no/publ/statsviten-skap/2004/19095/19095.pdf>

### **Reports**

Amnesty International, *Rwanda: Ending the Silence*, 1997. Accessed at, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AFR47/032/1997/en/dom-AFR470321997en.html>.

*Rwanda: A new Catastrophe? Increased International Efforts Required to Punish Genocide and Prevent Further Bloodshed*, Human Rights Watch/Africa, Nov. 1994. Accessed at, <http://www.grandslacs.net/doc/2416.pdf>.

## Failure of the Media: Rwanda Genocide and the Responsibility to Report

Gerry Caplan, Rwanda: The Preventable Genocide, Report for Organization of African Unity's International Panel of Eminent Personalities, July 2000. Accessed at, [http://www.africa-union.org/Official\\_documents/reports/Report\\_rowanda\\_genocide.pdf](http://www.africa-union.org/Official_documents/reports/Report_rowanda_genocide.pdf)

The Rwanda Media Experience from Genocide', International Media Support, March 2003. Accessed at, [http://www.ims.dk/files/publications/Rwanda%20media%20experience%20 Report%20June03.pdf](http://www.ims.dk/files/publications/Rwanda%20media%20experience%20Report%20June03.pdf).

### Online Sources

[http://www.gppac.org/documents/Media\\_book\\_nieuw/p2\\_11\\_rwanda.htm](http://www.gppac.org/documents/Media_book_nieuw/p2_11_rwanda.htm)

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C01E7D61E31F930A35750C0A9649C8B63>

<http://www.globalpolicy.org/intljustice/tribunals/rwanda/2003/1203media.htm>

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C01E7D61E31F930A35750C0A9649C8B63>

<http://www.preventgenocide.org/edu/pastgenocides/rwanda/resources/>

<http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1999/rwanda/>

<http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200109/power-genocide>.

[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/19/world/africa/19rwanda.html?\\_r=1&scp=4&sq=The%20Genocide%20State&st=cse](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/19/world/africa/19rwanda.html?_r=1&scp=4&sq=The%20Genocide%20State&st=cse)

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9503E4D71631F931A1575BC0A9679C8B63&scp=6&sq=The%20Genocide%20State&st=cse>.

<http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=1241>

[http://www.legalaffairs.org/issues/September-October-2002/feature\\_raston\\_sepoct2002.msp](http://www.legalaffairs.org/issues/September-October-2002/feature_raston_sepoct2002.msp).

[http://www.boston.com/news/world/articles/2004/04/05/rwanda\\_media\\_struggle\\_with\\_press\\_curbs/](http://www.boston.com/news/world/articles/2004/04/05/rwanda_media_struggle_with_press_curbs/)

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3257748.stm>.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3601369.stm>.

[http://archives.cbc.ca/war\\_conflict/peacekeeping/topics/1686/](http://archives.cbc.ca/war_conflict/peacekeeping/topics/1686/).

<http://www.radionetherlands.nl/features/media/dossiers/hateradioamerica.html>.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hutu\\_Ten\\_Commandments](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hutu_Ten_Commandments).

## **Addendum**

### **“Ten Commandments of the Bahutu”**

1. Every Hutu should know that a Tutsi woman, whoever she is, works for the interest of her Tutsi ethnic group. As a result, we shall consider a traitor any Hutu who
  - marries a Tutsi woman
  - befriends a Tutsi woman
  - employs a Tutsi woman as a secretary or a concubine.
2. Every Hutu should know that our Hutu daughters are more suitable and conscientious in their role as woman, wife and mother of the family. Are they not beautiful, good secretaries and more honest?
3. Hutu women, be vigilant and try to bring your husbands, brothers and sons back to reason.
4. Every Hutu should know that every Tutsi is dishonest in business. His only aim is the supremacy of his ethnic group. As a result, any Hutu who does the following is a traitor:
  - makes a partnership with Tutsi in business
  - invests his money or the government’s money in a Tutsi enterprise
  - lends or borrows money from a Tutsi
  - gives favors to Tutsi in business (obtaining import licenses, bank loans, construction sites, public markets, etc.).
5. All strategic positions, political, administrative, economic, military and security should be entrusted only to Hutu.

## Failure of the Media: Rwanda Genocide and the Responsibility to Report

6. The education sector (school pupils, students, teachers) must be majority Hutu.
7. The Rwandan Armed Forces should be exclusively Hutu. The experience of the October 1990 war has taught us a lesson. No member of the military shall marry a Tutsi.
8. The Hutu should stop having mercy on the Tutsi.
9. The Hutu, wherever they are, must have unity and solidarity and be concerned with the fate of their Hutu brothers.
  - The Hutu inside and outside Rwanda must constantly look for friends and allies for the Hutu cause, starting with their Hutu brothers.
  - They must constantly counteract Tutsi propaganda.
  - The Hutu must be firm and vigilant against their common Tutsi enemy.
10. The Social Revolution of 1959, the Referendum of 1961, and the Hutu Ideology, must be taught to every Hutu at every level. Every Hutu must spread this ideology widely. Any Hutu who persecutes his brother Hutu for having read, spread, and taught this ideology is a traitor.<sup>74</sup>

---

74 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hutu\\_Ten\\_Commandments](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hutu_Ten_Commandments).