

# Killing of Innocence

By Krikor Angacian, Cold Spring Harbor High School, New York

**Beslan, Russia**  
**September 1, 2004**

It was a Wednesday and the first day of school for many children in the town of Beslan. In many Russian towns though a blissful occasion, with celebrations this first day of school would be unlike any other.

Parents had either just dropped their children off to school or were in the process of doing so. At 9:30 AM local time, two unmarked vehicles pulled up to Beslan Middle School Number One, whose students' ages ranged from seven to eighteen years



old. Thirty-two men and women piled out of the automobiles in ski masks. A few of these armed assailants had explosive suicide belts. These "belts" were actually vests that wrapped around the stomach and have straps to hold them up. The vests contain explosives, such as dynamite. If the thought of humans being blown up senselessly is not enough, these vests also contained bolts, screws, and other small metal objects so that when they were detonated, the objects would fly through the air and rip through human flesh.

As the police arrived, they began firing on the terrorists. Unfortunately, five of the brave officers died in that shootout, with the trivial reward of killing only one of the many terrorists. The terrorists then rushed into the building, grabbing parents, children, teachers, and passers-by as hostages. In all, the terrorists held approximately 1,300 people captive. Fortunately, a group of the hostages were able to flee during the initial assault.

The authorities claimed that the terrorists held only 350 hostages, while in reality it was many more. The terrorists

were livid because the authorities were diminishing the number of hostages, so they then proceeded to kill 20 male detainees. Shortly after, the Russian army arrived with all of its special units, including the Alpha Anti-Terrorist Team. The terrorists then moved all the hostages into the gymnasium and began setting bombs in the gym. To further ensure no resistance, the terrorists warned the hostages that if one of the terrorists was killed, fifty hostages would be slain. If one of the terrorists got hurt by the authorities, twenty hostages would be killed. The terrorists made clear that these numbers did not exclude children. The final threat that the terrorists made was if the government should choose to use force against them, they would be forced to blow up the entire school with everyone inside of it. The Russian authorities tried to negotiate but to no avail. Tensions were high both inside and outside the school.

**September 2, 2004**

By this time, hope was starting to fade for the hostages. They had been deprived of water and food in extreme heat for almost forty eight hours. The hostage takers refused to allow medicine to be brought in or for the bodies of the innocent who had been slain to be taken out. To make matters even worse, negotiations with the terrorists had been slowly decaying and the little hope that remained was gradually diminishing.

However, this day was not a complete disappointment. Twenty six women and children were released because of the negotiation led by former Ingush President Ruslan Aushev. Mothers were made to choose which one of their many children should accompany them out of the school.

At 3:30 in afternoon, two explosions could be heard at the school. The explosions occurred just minutes apart from each other. These explosions were caused by RPG's (rocket propelled grenades) and they were fired by the terrorists. They were attempting to push back Russian military and authorities. The day ended as quietly as it had started. Day two was silent day of suffering for the famished hostages.

**September 3, 2004**

The third and final day of the siege proved to be the most horrific. The terrorists allowed authorities to remove bodies that had begun to decay. At 1:04, while the medical units advanced upon the school, the terrorists shot at them. Two more explosions were heard and two medical workers were killed by stray gunfire. The rest took of the doctors took off without a moment's hesitation. Part of the gymnasium began to crumble, giving an opportunity for many of the hostages to escape. A group of thirty hostages decided to take their chances and attempted to run. Unfortunately, the terrorists began firing upon them. By this point it was total chaos and the Russian army began moving in.



There are still some lingering questions about this three day catastrophe. Who were these terrorists? What did they want? Why did they do it this way? Why kill the innocent? Even though the terrorists were believed to be Chechen rebels, this is not the complete truth. It is now known that they were in fact Arabs, Tatars, Kazakhs, Chechens, Uzbeks, and one of them was a resident of Beslan. The authorities now know that they were part of an Islamist terrorist group which supports Chechen independence. The terrorists' desires went far beyond independence. Chechnya is a small province in Russia. If children are our future, what are we teaching them?

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It is still not clear who started firing first and where the explosions came from. One hostage reported that a bomb that was hung insecurely on the basketball hoop fell. Another said that someone tripped over a bomb's wire and triggered the blast. It was a fierce battle between the terrorists and the Russian authorities and there were many casualties on both sides. Civilians, many of whom were fathers of children inside, joined in the fight using their own weapons.

The terrorists then detonated all their bombs. What was left of the gymnasium was completely destroyed. Commandos began blowing holes in the walls, hoping for survivors to run through. Three gunmen were found in the basement of the school and eventually were killed along with the hostages they held. One terrorist, who somehow escaped the battle, was beaten by the fathers of the victims. There still were minor skirmishes going on within the school but for the most part the day had ended. The siege was over but the lives of the victims and their families would never be the same.

#### AFTERMATH:

Even today, it is still not known exactly how many people were killed. It is said to be 331 civilians and eleven soldiers that died. A woman committed suicide the day she returned home from the tragic event. Many more that were injured that day died in the hospital hours later. Eleven Alpha team members were killed, including the leader of the division.



# Terrorism in Beslan Affects Russian Students

## September 1: One Day of My Life

By Galina Novichova, age 15, School 689,  
Moscow, Russia

On the 1 of September I got up very early, because I was a little bit nervous about going to the 10<sup>th</sup> form. I also wanted to see all my classmates and teachers, whom I missed in summer. I couldn't wait any more, so I took the flowers and went to school.

My first school day in the 10<sup>th</sup> form was perfect, as my mood, and I guessed that nothing would spoil it. But when I came home and turned on the television, I heard about the tragedy that happened in our country, in the little town named Beslan. A group of terrorists captured the school and took in hostages all people, who were there.

As far as I'm concerned, the 1st of September is known not only as a Day of Knowledge, but also as a Day of Peace. And it's a blasphemy that in such a day somebody wants to hurt people's hearts and bring grief to the families.

I don't know how to prevent the terrorist threat, but I'm sure that people must unite and work for the future, for the peace, for the safe life to their children. We must avoid such things that happened in Beslan. International terrorism isn't a thing that can live on our planet.

## One Day in My Life

By Kate Romantsova, age 15, School 689,  
Moscow, Russia.

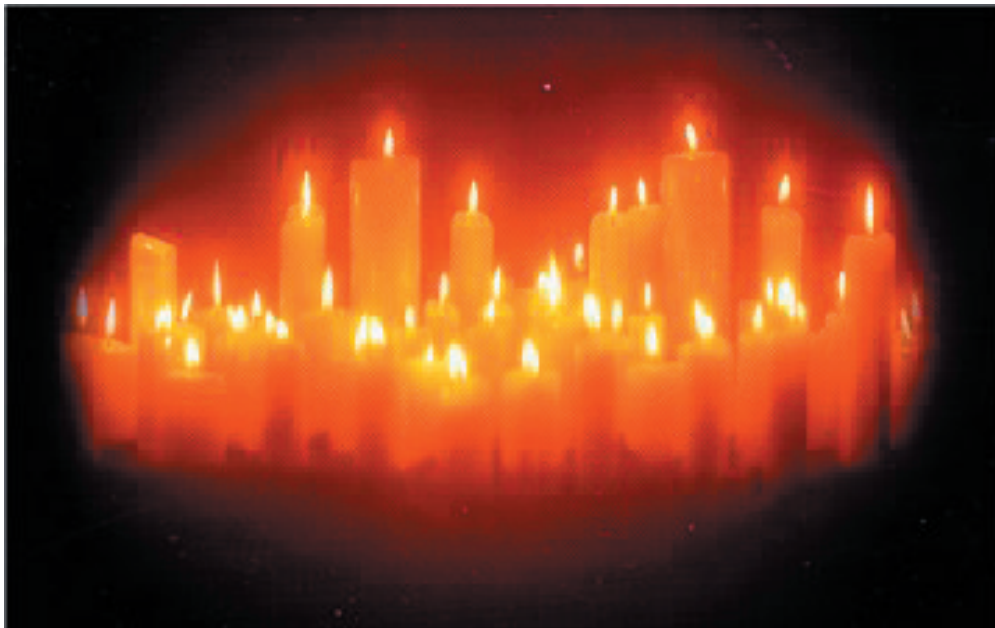
On 31 August every child, who was big enough for going to school, was a little bit nervous because it was a next step in our life and no one could imagine that such horrible thing would happen...

I was talking with my mum when the telephone rang. It was my grandmother. She asked me not to go to school on 1 September because it was very dangerous and possibly it would be a terrorist act. I did not pay attention to her words; I believed that nobody would collar school. I was mistaken.

I do not remember how I learned about the capture in Beslan, but I know that at that moment I could not say any word, and of course I remembered about grandmother's words. It was terrible. I could not and I cannot understand how lousy and dirty can people be. It is awful that somebody dared an attempt on children's lives.

I watched the news and cried, not because it could happen in my school too, but because the numbers of dead people were horrific and because I heard about little baby with two gunshot wounds.

People who did this are not people. They are fiends who do not have any soul. They are too dishonest to be buried as humans. Maybe I am too cruel, but who are they? They cannot understand that we are children with our problems. We do not suppose why adults have such big discords. We only understand that on account of their stupid problems, people and children die. We must stop this now or later it will be too late!



## **One Day in My Life**

**By Daria Suklyshkina, Age 15, School 689, Moscow, Russia**

On the first of September, I woke up and started preparing for school. Honestly, I was not attracted with the perspective to see my classmates, but I forced myself to go and look happy. Being made up and smiling, I went to school. Everything was going OK so I relaxed. The day was not bad; that's why I came home rather satisfied. By the way I have a habit, when I come home I turn the TV on immediately. The picture shown there at every channel shocked me. The newsreader was saying that the group of terrorists captured more than eight hundred of people in Beslan's school. It happened when the school's parade of the First of September had started. Lots of people had gone there with the whole families and were brought to the gym.

The children who were near the boiler-room tried to be rescued by jumping through the window, but the terrorists started firing at them. Luckily, most of them escaped but the person who rescued them was shot. In twenty-four hours the terrorists set free the women with kids younger than two years old. They informed that they had spent all this time sitting in a perimeter of the gym with no water and medicine. The captured men had been forced to dismantle the floor for mining and then were shot in front of the kids' eyes. For making people sure that it wasn't a "joke" the

terrorists shot some kids and even one of the terrorists. Two days later the siege started. The terrorists tried to survive by covering themselves with kids. Thanks to our military forces most of the terrorists were shot. One of them was found by Beslan's people and torn to pieces. During the siege unfortunately some bombs exploded and many people were burned and some got shrapnel wounds.

Trying to help them, most of the grownups of our country went to hospitals to give that people blood transfusions and give money. In our school we also collected some money for Marina Mihailova, the teacher, who is only twenty-four ears old and had more than fifty per cent of her skin burnt. Her father was killed in the accident; he was that boiler who had rescued the kids, and her mother is still afraid to tell it to her. But Marina feels it like every child who had lost his mum or dad or maybe both of them, like a mother who knows or not that her child is dead, like a grandmother who knows that she has no future because all her family will never come home.

I will never forget that day. I am sure everyone must remember it, too, not to repeat it in the future.

## **The Holocaust and Terrorism**

**By Galina Novichkova, age 15; School 689, Moscow, Russia**

The tragedy of the Holocaust is one of the saddest events in the history of the World War II. From 1939 till 1945 in fascist death camps were killed 11.5 million people - 5 million Christians and 6.5 million Jews. Most of these people died on the territory of Poland - they were burnt in stoves, gassed in the chambers, shot, hung, or buried alive. Fascists spared nobody: neither children nor women.

Since that time passed 60 years, but people still remember such names as Auschwitz, Treblinka, Belzec, Maidanec, Sobibor, Birkenau. They can't forget the horrors of the war and millions of dead. Fascism was defeated, but nowadays we can hear about grave profanations, about attempts to justify Adolph Hitler, and all

brutalities done by fascists.

But there is another force, which in the future can be as dangerous as fascism – terrorism. And now, somewhere in mountains, there are people who can organize a terrorist act or take in hostage peaceful inhabitants, as it was on the 1 of September in the Russian town Beslan.

Nowadays, the world, a step over the 20 century, has changed. We realize the necessity of fighting with evil that makes us afraid for the lives of our relatives. Death of children or women – you can call it any word – Holocaust or terrorist attack – is the most monstrous and inadmissible thing that can happen in the modern world.

# Caught in the Crossfire

**By Jumanah Hassan, Schreiber High School, Port Washington, New York**

On December fourth, 2003, the UN held a conference about “War Affected Children”. Present were a wide variety of students coming from countries all over the world. In a UN lecture hall, large enough to hold eight hundred people, Olara Otunnu and Michelle Morris (two prominent members in an organization dedicated to children and armed conflict) spoke of the plight of young people caught in the middle of adult wars. Eva Olsson also told her story as a Holocaust survivor. The main focus of the event was the conflict in Sudan.

The civil war in Sudan has been going on for more than twenty years. The war is between two very different groups of people: the Muslim Northerners and the Christian Southerners. Differences in religion, language, and ethnicity have caused much tension between these peoples. The war intensified in 1989 when a new government, instituted by the northerners was put into place. Southern rebel groups, such as the “Sudan People’s Liberation Army” (SPLA) revolted, and the Northerners fought back. As the two groups fight and raid each others towns, thousands of children, both Muslim and Christian, are caught in the crossfire. Sudan is slowly making progress towards peace, as a permanent truce that was signed by the government of Sudan and southern rebels demonstrates; however, as Sudan moves ahead to a brighter future, its dark past and painful memories will always remain.

During the conference some students had the special opportunity of speaking privately with three Sudanese brothers: Michael, 19; James, 21; and Isaiah, 25. When their town was raided in the middle of the night, the three brothers were forced to leave everything behind and flee. Unaccompanied, they, along with many other children, trekked six-hundred miles across the Sahara desert. Eventually they arrived in Ethiopia, where they stayed in a refugee camp. There, half of the child refugees died. For every two weeks they were given just eight pounds of food. Isaiah commented: “We had to eat some days and skip others.” When Ethiopia was taken over by a new government, all refugees were forced to leave. Through the help of the UN; Michael, James, and Isaiah were brought to America. Currently, they are struggling to support themselves while getting an education at the same time.

Much sought-after speaker Eva

Olsen also shared some of her time with conference participants to speak about how war tore her family apart. When she was just fourteen, her family was arrested and sent to a Nazi death camp. There, most of her family was killed in a gas chamber. She was stripped of all her belongings when she was forced to leave Sweden, left only with the pain and grief of leaving her entire life behind. So traumatized by the tragedies she witnessed, Eva stayed silent for fifty years. Eventually she decided that it was time for her to speak out. Currently Eva is an activist for hope, peace, and tolerance. She regularly gives talks at schools and seminars stressing the need for people to love and accept each other as they are.

The problem of war affected children is very real. After listening to the words of Eva and the three Sudanese brothers, it is evident that trauma and grief is universal, not confined to just one ethnicity or race. What was stressed the most by the speakers was the need for tolerance and hope. As Eva commented: “We are part of one family, the human family. Only the truth will set us free, and when we’re free we can help all mankind.”

-Thanks to Evelina Zarkh



**Students from Schreiber High School meet at U.N. with Sudanese brothers**

## The War in Kashmir

By Natasha Mir, Cold Spring Harbor High School, New York

Kashmir, disputed territory in the northern part of the Indian subcontinent, is bound on the north by Afghanistan and China, on the east by China, on the south by India, and on the west by Pakistan. Kashmir is famous for its natural beauty and has often been referred to as the 'Switzerland of the East'. The heart of the area is the fertile Vale of Kashmir (known as The Valley), which lies between the Himalayas and the Pir Panjal mountain range. About 12 million people live in Kashmir, of which around 70% are Muslims. The rest include Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists. Hindus live mostly in the south and around the city of Jammu. To the east is the Ladakh region, where the majority of the people are Buddhists and of Tibetan origin.

Kashmir has been the key to the dispute between India and Pakistan since their independence from the British in 1947. Each country claims Kashmir as a part of its territory. China controls a portion of the territory in the east. As a result of a rebellion in 1947, India and Pakistan have been constantly at war over the territory of Kashmir. The problem of Kashmir, unresolved for nearly five decades, is a darkening stain on India, Pakistan, and the world community. Though the United Nations has been "seized of" the issue almost from its beginning in 1947, the world community has virtually turned its back on Kashmir's suffering, although it occasionally goes through the motions of being involved. Meanwhile, two generations of Kashmiris have been scarred by the daily violence of insurgency, counterinsurgency, and human rights abuse.

Since 1989 the controversy over Kashmir has taken a violent turn in the valley; the Kashmiri people themselves have taken up arms against the Indian occupation. More recently, India has increased its role as an oppressor in Kashmir. The deployment of over 700,000 troops to silence the voices of the Kashmiri people is seen as the only solution by the Indian government, resulting in gross violations of human rights. These crimes have been carried out as a matter of routine, and are not looked upon as important. The US State department, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch have recorded varying categories of human rights violations in Kashmir. These include:

- Political and extrajudicial killings
- Disappearances
- Rape
- Torture and custodial abuse
- Arbitrary arrest and detention
- Willful destruction of property

- Denial of fair trial
- Arbitrary interference into privacy, family, home and correspondence
- Use of excessive force and violations of humanitarian law
- Suppression of freedom of speech and press
- Suppression of freedom of peaceful assembly and association
- Suppression of religious freedom

Due to these excesses, more than 80,000 Kashmiris have been killed since 1990, with a lot more unaccounted for. Thousands of helpless Muslim Kashmiris have fled across to eastern parts of Kashmir for safety and are now living in refugee camps. For the last five years the people of the State have intensified their efforts in order to invite the attention of the world community towards the "Kashmir Dispute", though the people of the State had been fighting for their just cause peacefully for the last forty eight years. The Indian Forces, stationed in Kashmir, have been given a free hand to kill any person they choose. These powers have been given to them under the draconian laws like "Disturbed Areas Act of 1990" and "Indian Armed Forces Act of 1990".

Indifference shown by world community to the miseries of people, have encouraged and given a free hand to armed forces,



to deal with the people, as they like. In October 1992, the Indian Armed forces started to intensify the killing of people immediately after their arrest. Now the armed forces have resorted to another policy of “Catch and Kill” which means that no sooner a person is taken into custody, within minutes he is brutally tortured and killed. In other cases, innocent civilians are arrested and taken to border areas where they are shot. The Indian government then publicizes that these innocent people were killed because they were militants, and that their troops had to kill them for the safety of Kashmir. This clearly does not make sense because it is the Indian troops that are harming the people of Kashmir and violating these people’s rights. Torture and rape are other devices that the Indian army has used to suppress the Kashmiri people. An estimated one million women have been bereaved, tortured, beaten up or killed, and many hundreds have been subjected to barbaric sexual assaults. These figures represent a minute portion of the atrocities in Kashmir as a majority of them go undocumented.

The number of killings per year has decreased significantly since the year 2000, and Kashmir may very well be on the way to becoming peaceful again. While the people of

the state of Kashmir continue to march ahead for socio-economic emancipation, India and Pakistan agreed to a cease-fire for their troops stationed in Kashmir in November of 2003, even though the cease-fire did not apply to the militant secessionists. The two countries have respected current lines of control, and the countries’ leaders have signed agreements to reduce troops along the line, open border posts to trade, and resolve the dispute by peaceful means.

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# The Undemocratic Democracy of Turkey

**By Sevan Angacian, Georgetown University, Washington D.C.**

The nation of Turkey cannot consider itself a true democracy as it does not tolerate the freedoms of speech and expression, which are the basic tenets of a democratic system. The powerful Turkish military has taken over the government three times since the 1970’s. As M. L. Rossi rhetorically asked in her book, What Every American Should Know About the Rest of the World, “Is it a democracy or a military government enforcing what it thinks is democracy?” (158). The Turkish government refuses to admit to its actions as the perpetrators of the Armenian Genocide in 1915. As such, it does not tolerate any of its citizens or those of other nations to commemorate the Genocide through venues such as writing, theatre, speech, or artwork. Books have been banned, records destroyed, theatre productions stopped, and ties with nations broken, all in the hope that the world would forget that the Genocide occurred and Turkey might remain the only *alleged* Muslim democracy in the world. Turkey is also undemocratic in that they do not grant the country’s Kurdish population rights despite the fact that they make up one-fifth of the country’s population. Kurdish language television and schools are not permitted. Writing about the Kurds and their situation is banned in the country and those who do not abide by that decree face harsh punishment carried out by the Turkish military, as they are the ones that form the backbone of the supposedly democratic, but truly militaristic, government.

There are those who argue that the Turkish government is a democratic system and that all accusations of it not being so are ludicrous. If one argues the presence of a democracy in Turkey

through historical terms it can be said that Kemal Ataturk, the President of Turkey from 1923 to 1938, who changed the country into a secular and Western-leaning state, established a democratic nation at that time. He banned polygamy, gave women the right to vote, freed women from their veils and men from their fez, modernized businesses, and improved the infrastructure of the country. However, the same man who formed modern Turkey and made it into a secular, Western-like nation, refused to recognize the Kurds. He was supposedly making a democracy and yet banned the Kurds from having any rights.

Those who believe that Turkey is a democratic nation may also point out the fact that recently Turkey adhered to democratic principles when the country was deciding how to act upon the matter of Iraq and the United States’ decision to invade that nation. At the time, 94% of the Turkish public was opposed to the war in Iraq and therefore the government decided not to play a role in Mission Iraqi Freedom, despite the opposite wishes of the Turkish military. In her article entitled “Turkey’s Path to Real Democracy,” Turkish journalist Tulin Daloglu points out the fact that

Turkey’s army behaved very much according to the standards of the Western democracies in choosing to remain on the sidelines of politics. This represents a major departure from past practice, even in more recent times, when Turkey’s military often ‘steered’ events from behind the scenes- if it did not intervene outright. (4)

Though this statement admits that the military was often the driving force behind government decisions and actions, it also states that Turkey has changed for the better in terms of becoming more democratic in its policy. The voices of the Turkish constituents were heard in Turkey for the first time ever in March of 2003 and will be in the future as well, according to those who believe in the integrity of the Turkish government. Ironically, the same journalist who claimed earlier in her article that a democracy is present in Turkey also wrote, in reference to the military, "Yet, behind the scenes, they continue to watch the party members closely" (4). This contradiction within her article makes one question how democratic Turkey can be if that is the case.

The Turkish government stands firmly behind its stance that the deaths of the Armenians in 1915 were not under the category of genocide, but rather were results of actions of war and civil unrest. It claims that there was much civil upheaval during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the deaths can be attributed to that. Also, Turkish authorities claim that the Armenians were helping the invading Russian army during World War I and so the killing of the Armenians was analogous to killing an invading enemy army. Famine and disease have also been mentioned as causes of deaths of Armenians during World War I.

Although over thirty thousand lives have been taken since 1984 because of the warfare between the Turkish government and its Kurdish population, the Turkish government claims that their undemocratic actions towards the Kurds are well warranted. The government insists that the Kurds are trying to break away from Turkey and form a separate Kurdistan, and therefore are causing turmoil within the nation. The Turkish military also claims that the Kurds are destructive in that they attack pipelines. If Turkey were a true democracy, they would listen to their people and allow free voting to bring about a peaceful resolve rather than fight them and deny them their rights as citizens of Turkey.

Historians concur that Turkey's perceptions of the Armenian Genocide and the Kurdish people is incorrect. The Turkish government refuses to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide as such and goes to great lengths to stop the discussion and learning of the horrific events of 1915, despite convincing evidence that it was a deliberate mass murder carried out with the intent to put an end to the Armenians' collective existence. The Young Turks, the political party in power in 1915, ordered the deportation and ultimate killing of the Armenians from Armenia and Anatolia. They were subjected to expropriation, deportation, abduction, torture, massacre, and starvation. One and a half million Armenians perished during that time, constituting three-quarters of the Armenian population of that region, and yet Turkey denies that it was deliberate for fear of economic and political consequences that would surely follow any profession of their past atrocities against humanity. This economic concern is also the catalyst for Turkey's behavior with the Kurds. It is well known in Turkey that the area of the country in which the Kurds reside is a strategic one. It contains important oil and water resources that Turkey could not afford to lose. It is for this primary reason that Turkey refuses to allow the Kurds to exist freely and flourish within their own cultural identity, but instead, uses military force to coerce the Kurds.

Surely the Turkish government should realize that other nations have committed similar actions, admitted to their wrongdoings, and are still well established in the international community despite their brutal pasts. For example, two such nations include Germany and the United States of America. Germany, after carrying through the mass killings, collectively known as the Holocaust, of people of Jewish descent and other minorities, admitted to its murderous actions. However, the German 'mea maxima culpa' after the war did not prohibit the country from becoming the third most technologically powerful nation in the world, following the United States and Japan. Germany grants the freedoms of speech and expression, as the Holocaust can be written and spoken about freely. Similarly, the United States has always had a conflict-prone relationship with the Native Americans. Thousands of deaths of Native Americans have been recorded and attributed to white Americans. However, regardless of the brutality of its past, the United States is the most powerful country in the world in many regards. The nation redressed its wrongs by allocating land for the Native Americans and exempting them from paying taxes. People are allowed to discuss the past actions of the United States without fear of military opposition. Unlike Germany and the United States of America who acted democratically to admit to their pasts, Turkey denies



all accusations of genocide and unwarranted killing of Kurds and works tirelessly to prevent the international acknowledgement of its brutality.

Turkey claims to be a democratic nation, yet its actions denote those of a military government. The freedoms of speech and expression have been denied to those who write and publish books relating to the Armenian Genocide and the poor treatment of the Kurds. Because the government will not actually admit to its actions of banning and burning books since it claims to be a true democracy, the powerful Turkish military takes over this “duty.” Publishers are convicted if they publish books about the massacre of the Armenians. Authors, too, are harassed by the military. Kemal Yalcin, a writer of Turkish descent, wrote a book entitled, You Rejoice My Heart, a collection of personal interviews with Armenian survivors of the Genocide. After being run out of Turkey for his revolutionary journalism several years prior to publishing his latest work, he returned to his homeland, Turkey, to have his book published. However, “three days before his book was set to be released in Turkey in 2001, all copies of it were shredded” (Goshert). The basic rights of humans to express themselves through writing were denied by enigmatic military plotting. Furthermore, when Fatih Tas, the publisher of Noam Chomsky’s book, American Interventionism, attempted to publish the work, he was tried in court because of the chapters on anti-Kurd brutality carried out by the Turkish military. The nation of Turkey holds so tightly to the term “democracy” yet is slothful in keeping the principles that form a democratic system. A nation in which one cannot publish and distribute documents of truth should not be allowed to call itself a democracy.

In addition to banning and destroying books, the Turkish government also stops theatre productions from being performed, another variety of denying the freedom of expression. The government repressed the play, Beast on the Moon, a work in which the two main characters are survivors of the Armenian Genocide. The play was being directed by Knut Weber in Germany and was scheduled to perform at the European Culture Days Festival of Karlsruhe. The Armenian Reporter stated on

May 22, 2004 that

“When Beast on the Moon appeared in the schedule of plays to be presented, Weber received a phone call from a Mr. Kuk, who is the city’s Consul General to Turkey, and thus a representative of the Turkish government in Ankara. He informed Weber that, if the Festival presented Beast on the Moon, Turkey would officially boycott the entire Festival.” (1)

Turkey feared that the presentation of this play would undermine its efforts of denying the Genocide and trying to get the world to forget that it occurred. As Stephen Feinstein, Director of the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at the University of Minnesota stated, “Artists are not easily co-opted, they have certain insights, and someone with a totalitarian mind will see the worst, and someone with a democratic mind will see the best” (qtd. in Armenian Reporter 15). The play has already won thirty awards, five of which are equivalent to the American Tony award. Those that view the play democratically and accept its message clearly see it as an exemplary work while those, such as Turkey, who choose to view it as a threat only prove further their non-democratic outlooks. By forcing Mr. Weber to withdraw the play from the Festival, Turkey proved that it does not truly believe in the tenets of democracy. As Mr. Weber said, “A country which denies its own history has a problem with democracy. Ankara and the Turkish Consulate responded very toughly and took the tone of a dictatorship, which is not like a democracy” (qtd. in Armenian Reporter 15). Turkey cannot hope to be regarded as a democracy



**Tophane Mosque (Armory Mosque) in Istanbul**

by the international community by hiding its past. Denying the right of freedom of expression only proves that Turkey is not yet capable of being called a true democracy.

Turkey has also tried to hide its past by interfering with commemorations of the Genocide in countries neighboring Turkey. For example, on April 17, 2004, Poland planned to commemorate the Armenian Genocide with the unveiling of a stone cross, or khatchkar. Turkey tried to stop the memorial from mentioning the word "genocide" and was active in interfering with the plans for the occasion. The word was ultimately used in the engraving on the stone, but only after much hassle with the opposed Turkish government. As one Polish clerk asked upon reflecting on this matter, "Why are the Turks afraid of the facts? They could simply admit what they did and the present-day conflict could be avoided" (Karayan 3). The commemoration ceremony also brought up the topic of the disappearance of a Polish historian in Turkey. Students present at the Genocide commemoration passed out fliers about Rafal Yedrashik who was in Turkey in the summer of 2002 to make a film about the Armenian Genocide at the time of his disappearance. Neither the Turkish government nor the military has made comments about Yedrashik's whereabouts or their connection to his mysterious disappearance. Turkey continually tries to stop all forms of remembrance and teaching of the Genocide, proving further the existence of a militaristic government system.

Not only does Turkey cause rifts between itself and individual groups and people, but it also does so with entire nations. Each time that a nation resolves to officially use the term "genocide" when referring to the killings of Armenians in 1915, Turkey shows some form of opposition and acts undemocratically. Two nations who recently passed bills recognizing the Armenian Genocide are France and Canada. In May of 1998, France's parliament passed a bill recognizing the Genocide. It was reported by Reuters on May 29, 1998 that, "Turkey has warned France against passing the bill, saying trade and diplomatic relations would suffer," (1) and indeed, they did. The Turkish military enforced a campaign to boycott all goods with a French label. Two of the main products that were boycotted include wine and textiles. Turkey also drafted a plan to refuse to enter into contracts concerning defense with France. In April of 2004, Canada officially recognized the Genocide, but not without strong resistance and many threats from the supposedly democratic Turkish government. Turkey publicly stated, "...the federal Canadian politicians will bear the responsibility of all the negative consequences that this resolution will bring" (Mooradian 2). They also attempted to force a change through business contracts, similar to what they had done with France. A \$335 million contract and another of close to \$1 billion were placed in jeopardy to underscore the way Turkey felt about Canada's recognition of the Genocide. When the United States tried to help the Kurds in Turkey and Iraq through Operation

Provide Comfort, they were not successful in Turkey as they were in Iraq. The Turkish government threatened the United States by claiming they would not allow the U.S. to use integral Turkish airbases. Because of this, the United States did not help the Kurds free themselves from Turkish rule. The ways in which Turkey's government reacted to other nations' recognition of the Genocide and the desire for a separate Kurdistan indicate Turkey's fear of culpability and its lack of democratic principles.

A nation in which the freedoms of speech and expression are denied, truths are veiled, and the military rules, should not be considered a real democracy. Turkey is one such nation: a nation in which acceptance of the Armenian Genocide, of which Turkey was the perpetrator, is prohibited and minority groups are greatly discriminated against. The military has banned and burned books, stopped theatre productions, interfered with commemorations, and broken ties with other nations all in lieu of accepting its nation's wrongdoings. Its lack of democratic principles in these matters has contributed greatly to the European Union's apprehensions about possibly letting Turkey into the Union. The former president of France, Giscard d'Estaing, stated that if Turkey were to be admitted, it would mark "the end of the European Union" (qtd. in M.L. Rossi 162). The undemocratic actions of Turkey through which it denies fault in the Genocide and commits acts of hatred towards its Kurdish population only abate the country's efforts of becoming a truly democratic nation.

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# A Call to Action for Darfur

By Sevan Angacian, School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University

The weekend of February 4<sup>th</sup> 2005, held great importance for the international community as students from over ninety universities, including several outside the United States, gathered in Washington, D.C. for a National Leadership Conference entitled: “A Call to Action for Darfur, Sudan”. The conference, which I also attended, was hosted by Georgetown University’s **STAND**, Students Taking Action Now: Darfur, and by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The purpose of the conference was to further educate the students as to the situation in Sudan and to organize and network so that action can be taken to ameliorate the circumstances under which the Darfur residents are living.

Sudan borders the Red Sea in Northern Africa and is ruled by an Arab military regime. The ethnicity of the population consists of 52% black, 39% Arab, and 9% other. The genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan has caused the deaths of tens of thousands of civilians and the displacement of over one million people. These victims are considered to be “Africans,” mostly from the Fur, Zaghawa, and Masaalit groups. The perpetrators of the genocide in Sudan’s western region of Darfur are Sudanese government soldiers and members of the government-supported militia referred to as the Janjaweed. They are of Arab ethnicity, and therefore the Khartoum-based government is fueling ethnic and racial violence constituting genocide. They are inflaming ethnic conflict, impeding international efforts for humanitarianism, bombing civilians with aircraft, and murdering and raping innocent civilians. Some of the Darfurians have been able to flee to neighboring nations such as Chad, yet most are trapped inside Darfur, where thousands are dying each month from the effects of inadequate food, water, shelter, and healthcare. The United Nations further raised the alarm when they referred to the genocide as “the world’s worst humanitarian crisis.”

Beginning on Friday, February 4, 2005, students from across the globe, who are currently attending some of the most prominent universities of North America, gathered at Georgetown University for the opening events of the conference. On Friday evening, an interfaith service was held in recognition of the genocide in Darfur. The following morning, hundreds of students, most of whom had been housed by Georgetown students, left the campus for the Holocaust Museum. The morning program began with a welcome by Jerry Fowler, the Staff Director of the Committee on Conscience of the Museum, followed by a Holocaust survivor, Nesse Godin,

who was, in turn, followed by Omer Ismail, a spokesperson of the Darfur Union and Cofounder of Darfur Peace and Development. After the welcoming statements were completed, Omer Ismail and Ali Ali-Dinar, the Founder of the Darfur Information Center, were interviewed by two members of **STAND** in reference to the history of Darfur.

Following the interview in which students’ minds were refreshed with the background of the crisis, a short clip of the film, *Darfur Documentation Project*, which was produced by the Coalition for International Justice, was shown. The film included images of refugees living under stark conditions in neighboring Chad, as well as comments from those working on the film, remarking on what they saw in Darfur and the refugee camps outside the region as well. After the clip of the film was shown, three of the people involved with making the film took the stage and answered questions posed by students from the audience. One of the important points that was established during this time was the dire need for students to be involved with taking action against such crisis as the one in Darfur. They pointed out the facts that student action was not a strong force during the genocide in Rwanda and the ominous results that that bore on the country. They urged the audience to support Darfur and to speak out against the actions of the Janjaweed.

Following a brief lunch break, the students gathered once again into the auditorium to hear from policymakers from different institutions about the current situation and the policies that are being considered for action in Darfur. The four speakers



included John Prendergast, Special Advisor to the President and member of the International Crisis Group; Krista Riddley, Deputy Director of Policy and Advocacy, Oxfam America; Gayle Smith, Senior Fellow of the Center for American Progress; and Donald Steinberg, Senior Fellow of the United States Institute for Peace. One point of particular interest was that originally only \$2.3 million was allotted to efforts to help the situation in Darfur by the United States. That amount is the equivalent to what the United States is spending every thirty minutes in Iraq. At the conclusion of the session concerning policy, Donald Steinberg shared six ways that he felt students could make a difference in the Darfur region of Sudan. The first of these “six instructional points” was to find advocates, followed by establish priorities, identify and exploit actions and force events to occur, build partnerships, “follow the buck,” and unite.

What some students viewed as the grand finale to Saturday’s events was the speech given by General Romeo Dallaire, the man to whom command was given for the UN Observer Mission Uganda-Rwanda. Following several promotions and the reception of honorary awards, General Dallaire recently published his book entitled *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*. He is currently working as the Special Adviser to the Canadian Ministry of Defense on matters of child soldiers. His

speech, enhanced by a PowerPoint presentation, spoke of the need for clear vision, precise ideas, and concrete proposals.

On Sunday, students began their day, early once again, by meeting for various workshops that focused on how students could integrate programs of activism on their own universities’ campuses. Several of the workshops were led by students who presented how they had found it most effective to organize and lobby successfully. Following the workshops that took place in various classrooms of Georgetown University’s Intercultural Center, students gathered in Gaston Hall for further speeches and presentations by various entities such as MTV and by Sudanese students who are currently attending American universities.

The conference proved to be an effective and valuable resource for all students who attended. A large deal of networking took place between events as students met with one another and spoke about ways to integrate their individual programs with others. Hopefully, through these efforts, the genocide in Darfur, Sudan can be ended as quickly and peacefully as is possible.

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## Peace in Sudan and the Darfur Conflict

By Caryn Urbanczyk and Caroline Laverriere, Cold Spring Harbor High School, New York



**Signing of Peace Treaty**

of war between the Muslim north and the mainly Christian south, which has left an estimated 1.5 million people dead, cleared the way for the drafting of a new Constitution and the formation of a government in which the current insurgents will receive 30% of Congressional seats and in six years, southern states will have an opportunity to vote on secession. Furthermore, Sudan, which only recently began exporting oil, resolved how to share oil revenue and other wealth in this new peace deal.

Rebel leaders maintain that their goal is to create a united country, free from discrimination. However, with a new government assembled, a new flag, and national anthem, southern Sudan has begun to look increasingly like a “country-in-waiting” said the BBC’s Jonah Fisher. In fact, the rebels have never precisely stated whether they are fighting for a unified nation or

U n a n i m o u s l y endorsed by leaders of southern Sudan’s rebel movement, the agreement to end Africa’s longest running civil war was finally signed by faction leader John Garang and Vice President Ali Tama on January 9, 2005 in Kenya.

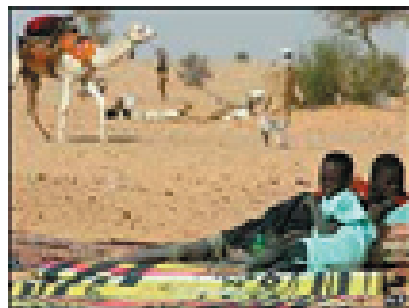
This peace arrangement, designed to end two decades

complete independence.

This 21 year civil war has pitted the Arab-Muslim dominated government in Khartoum against Christian and Animist southern rebels fighting for greater autonomy and a larger share of the country’s wealth and resources.

Beginning in 1983, the government, dominated by northern Arabs, tried to enforce Islamic Sharia law throughout Sudan. Southerners, many of whom are black African Christians or practice traditional religions, were upset by the government’s actions and began a rebellion. Some of the rebels became known as the Sudan’s People’s Liberation Army (SPLA).

U.N. and U.S. officials hope that the treaty will help end Sudan’s other conflicts, most prominently, the 23-month rebellion in the western Darfur region. This is where pro-government Arab militiamen known as the “Janjaweed,” an old Darfur epithet for bandits or “devils on horseback,” have attacked African villages in a campaign of burning, looting, raping, and killing. The militia group is accused of the “ethnic cleansing” of large swathes of black African territory. The Darfur conflict is a smaller,



**Africans displaced by Sudan Conflict**

accelerated version of Sudan's larger conflict. It is believed that more than 70,000 people have been killed and nearly 2 million displaced since the conflict began. The nearly two years of fighting has left an ugly trail of abandoned villages, and neighboring Chad has become host to over 200,000 Sudanese refugees.



**Janjaweed Member**

Former Secretary of State Colin Powell was the first government official to label Darfur a "genocide". Human rights groups and the US Congress were then quick to back this claim. However, as of early February, the UN refused to deem Sudan's conflict "genocide". It maintains only that a huge humanitarian crisis is occurring in Sudan. Hope remains though; if the UN agrees that genocide is in fact occurring, it will be legally obligated to respond to stop it. Despite significant international pressure and mounting criticism, the Sudanese government continues to avoid taking action against the Janjaweed. The Arab-led Khartoum government faces a threat of penalties from the United Nations Security Council for what the Bush administration has called "a campaign of ethnic cleansing and genocide against black Africans in the west," an accusation which Sudan has vigorously denied. Yet, even with the threat of sanctions and the promise of the Sudanese government to disarm the rebels, little has been done. The government is not trusted by the refugees, so even the thousands of security guards that the government did deploy are doing little to help. If the government fails to do anything, the United Nations might impose sanctions on the export of Sudanese oil and the country's purchase of weapons.

Although the two conflicts are not directly linked, rebel groups in both areas accuse the government of favoring the ruling Arab elite and demand a greater share of Sudan's power and wealth. The major difference between the conflicts is that the African Christian and animist groups in the south are opposed to government moves to introduce Islamic Sharia law, while in Darfur the rebels, who are Muslim, say that as non-Arabs, they too suffer discrimination.

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With the peace agreements in place, the work of humanitarian aid has begun and has already started to bring business activity. The Dutch Development Minister promised \$130 million in European aid, but on the condition of an end to the continuing conflict in the Darfur region. Many other foreign donors have pledged hundreds of millions of US dollars in aid, but also want to see progress in Darfur before releasing the funds.

In addition, the UN is hoping to deploy 10,000 peacekeepers sometime in March, to oversee the agreement between the government and the southern rebels.

Today many are hopeful that the recent treaty can bring peace to Sudan. The optimists are confident that with the end of one civil war in Sudan between the north and the south, there can also be peace and an end to the crisis in Darfur. An end to this



**Map of Sudan**

conflict would bring the possibility of ending the starvation and disease that so many are facing after being forced out of their homes. It would help aid groups gain access to areas in severe need of help and perhaps unify a country that has for so long been in fighting. With each day the situation in Sudan is changing, and only time will tell whether Sudan is on its way to peace.

**(Written: February, 2005)**

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# Not This Time: Taking a Stand Against Genocide in Darfur

**Lisa Rogoff, a 2004 Colgate University Graduate, is the University Outreach Coordinator for the Committee on Conscience at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.**

Twenty-nine Rogoffs are listed on a piece of paper with notes about the day they died and how they were killed by the Nazis. This paper looks all too similar to a list made by Darfurian refugees in Chad attempting to document the murders of their family members. I fear that in 50 years their grandchildren will have to visit a memorial to their family members killed in Darfur, just as I had to do for my family that perished in the Holocaust. After the Holocaust we proclaimed, “Never again.” Yet, again and again, we have failed to fulfill this promise. Now, in Darfur, as genocide is taking place, we must say, “Not this time.”

In early 2003, rebels drawn from non-Arab (or so-called “African”) ethnic groups, seeking a greater share of natural resources attacked police stations and military bases in Darfur. The government responded by enlisting militias from some of



Darfur’s “Arab” ethnic groups and launched a war on the civilian population from which the rebels drew their recruits. These people are clearly targeted because of their so-called “African” ethnic identity. The distinction between “Arab” and “African” may be largely subjective, but it is fueling a conflict in which hundreds of thousands of Darfurians have been killed, raped and chased from their homes. The “lucky” ones have fled to neighboring Chad and are living in squalid refugee camps.

In July 2004, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum declared a Genocide Emergency in Darfur. In September, then-Secretary of State, Colin Powell called the crisis in Darfur genocide. A United Nation inquiry found that “government forces and militias conducted indiscriminate attacks, including killing of civilians, torture, enforced disappearances, destruction of villages, rape and other forms of sexual violence, pillaging and forced displacement, throughout Darfur.” Yet not enough has been done to stop the violence, and the situation continues to worsen.

We have watched genocide unfold before our eyes before. Only after the killing ends do we acknowledge our inaction. Each day in Darfur the death toll rises, more women and children are raped, and human suffering continues. Time is of the essence. The sheer scope of genocide can deter people from acting to stop it. But individuals can make a difference. “If every member of the House and Senate had received 100 letters from people back home saying we have to do something about Rwanda, when the crisis was first developing, then I think the response would have been different,” said former Senator Paul Simon after the failure to stop the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

Right now, college students across the country are calling one another to action for Darfur. After a meeting at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum last fall, Georgetown University students formed STAND (Students Take Action Now for Darfur), which has grown to become a *national* coalition creating awareness and promoting activism for Darfur.

Through letter writing campaigns, nationwide fasts, candlelight vigils, and other activities, students are taking a stand against genocide. Last February, the Committee on Conscience—which guides the Holocaust Museum’s genocide prevention efforts—held a National Student Leadership Conference for Darfur, providing students with a venue for education about Darfur, networking, and developing plans of action. Four hundred students from 90 schools across the country attended and made a commitment to effect change in Darfur.

Students led movements for change during the civil-rights era and when apartheid existed in South Africa. They have the resources and motivation to influence and change policy through their determination and commitment; that is what the situation in Darfur requires.

Participation in the upcoming Minute of Silence for Darfur is one simple way to get involved and easily increase the awareness level on campus. On March 17<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 p.m. EST, colleges across the country will observe a minute of silence and stand in solidarity with the people of Darfur. To sign your campus up and learn more, visit [www.darfurminuteofsilence.org](http://www.darfurminuteofsilence.org). More information about Darfur and how to get involved is available at [www.committeeonconscience.org](http://www.committeeonconscience.org).

In the recent movie, *Hotel Rwanda*, as hotel manager Paul Rusesabagina gives refuge to over 1,000 Tutsis during the Rwandan genocide, he asks an American journalist how the international community cannot intervene once they see his footage. The journalist tells him that once they see the images, “They’ll say ‘Oh my God, that’s horrible!’ And then go on eating their dinners.” We cannot stand by and allow genocide to take place on our watch. Students must take a stand, create noise and tell the world: “Not this time.”