

**UN Adviser on Prevention of Genocide: "We Have to Make Sure the Security Council Acts"** International Peace Institute Adam Lupel 28 April 2014 The mass atrocities in Rwanda and Srebrenica provided "a shock to the international community," said Adama Dieng, the United Nations Secretary-General's special adviser on the prevention of genocide. The UN has been widely criticized for its failures in both, but in the intervening years, Mr. Dieng said the United Nations has made a lot of progress. "It takes time to change [UN] culture," he said.

He said, "too often, strategic interests of the member states are placed above human lives," and the failure of the UN to act is often rooted in Security Council members letting their own interests impact their decisions.

"And I keep repeating it: we have to make sure that the Security Council acts timely and decisively whenever we are witnessing situations of potential genocide or atrocity crimes," he said.

In Central African Republic (CAR), where, since 2012, sectarian violence has escalated and caused internal migration and hundreds of deaths, Mr. Dieng said a genocide is not happening, though there is a risk. "We do not use, of course, the term lightly," he said. "We talk about this risk of genocide because we have seen elements of the crime in place. We have seen very clear statement of intent to destroy, to wipe a population from the country, and I'm referring here to the Muslim population." He said CAR is at risk for all atrocity crimes, particularly crimes against humanity.

Mr. Dieng said the UN needs to invest more in prevention. "We must get involved earlier if we are to save lives, and if we are to stop tensions from escalating," he said. "We cannot say that we are not aware of what is happening in the world. We have enough early warning information."

Mr. Dieng used CAR as an example of the potential cost difference between early interventions and peacekeeping interventions. "With certainly less than \$100 million dollars, one could've prevented the crisis in Central African Republic leading to the establishment of a peacekeeping operation." In contrast, he said the CAR's peacekeeping operation could cost "at least \$1 billion dollars."

Mr. Dieng listed many improvements the UN has made in its approach, including its ability to act as "one UN," which he said means deciding on policy at headquarters and implementing coherent strategies on the ground. As an example, he cited the decision in February 2014 to "open the gates" of the peacekeeping mission in South Sudan and provide refuge to South Sudanese fleeing bloody political violence. "Thanks to that decision, thousands of lives were saved," he said. He contrasted this with 20 years ago "when the gates were opened, but only to

release the soldiers to go back home.”

Mr. Dieng said one situation his office is monitoring but does not receive enough attention is the sectarian violence in Myanmar. He said concern over the upcoming election, which is seen as a crucial step in Myanmar’s democratization, is clouding the issue. “We have to make sure that political appointees/opportunists will not allow that the people of Myanmar, particularly the Rohingya, who are at risk, be left abandoned... Because if we allow the situation to continue, you are facing the risk after the election of a situation which will be worse than what we are witnessing today.”

See a transcript of the full interview, and listen to or download a recording, [here](#)