

24 Years after Rwanda Genocide, Africans Advised to Promote Oneness, Patriotism, Inclusiveness

The Rwandan High Commissioner to Nigeria, His Excellency, Ambassador Stanislas Kamanzi, has charged youths in the continent to ensure that they become the opposing force to any negative influences that can lead to the breakdown of order, as the world marked the 24th anniversary of the 1994 Rwanda genocide, where over a million Rwandan Tutsis and moderate Hutus were brutally murdered.

Ambassador Kamanzi made the call during a symposium organised by the United Nations Information Centre, Lagos, the Rwandan High Commission in Lagos, and Covenant University in commemoration of the Rwandan massacre, with the theme '2018 International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda'.



The Rwanda High Commissioner to Nigeria, His Excellency Ambassador Stanislas Kamanzi, delivering his paper

The Rwandan diplomat noted that those who died during the one hundred-day pogrom were mostly women, infants and youths. He urged the youths to endeavour to comprehend more about the ideology of genocide and fight it unreservedly. According to him, "As you shape your character through formal and informal education, you must stand against those wrongs, even if this may involve sacrifice".

Ambassador Kamanzi stated that instead of striving to tap the capability and power of their people to foster development, the older generations of African leaders made the horrendous mistake of subjecting people of the African continent to cruelty.

He told the gathering that the people of Rwanda and Africa as a whole look forward to more synergies in advancing the fight against genocide and its ideology, so that the ever professed and broken "Never Again" promise can become a reality.

In his keynote address, a former United Nations Prosecutor, Barrister Segun Jegede, who spoke on the theme, 'The Rwandan Genocide: What Went Wrong and How to Ensure Never Again', said that the gathering could not have been held at a more auspicious moment in the collective history of human existence, coming at the end of arguably the most conflict prone century in human history.

Barrister Jegede noted with sadness how colonialism contributed in instituting a system that ended up promoting genocide. According to him, the labeling of a people that were hitherto of one language and culture, helped to create a chasm that led to the massacre.

The former prosecutor noted that since the unfortunate events in Rwanda, the international community has continuously showed lack of real commitment towards stemming massacres. He averred that despite the platitude of 'Never Again,' genocide have recurred in epic proportions in Darfur (Sudan) and the Central African Republic. He noted that as usual, the responses from the United States and other major world powers was non-committal and unhelpful rhetoric.

While noting that Sub-Saharan Africa is home to some of the world's most corrupt and ethnically fragmented nations, and the pattern discernible in previous cases of genocide showing strong correlation between ethnicism and genocide,

Barrister Jegede posited that there is an ever present element to trigger genocide in Sub-Saharan Africa than in any other region of the world. He advised African countries to guard against a repetition of the Rwandan experience by legislating against ethnic classification and return their various countries to the pre-colonial era when there was no ethnic grouping or distinction.

In his message to the gathering, the United Nations Secretary General, António Guterres, who was represented by the National Information Officer, United Nations Information Centre, Lagos, Dr. Oluseyi Soremekun, said that the 1994 genocide was at variance with certain aspects of the UN Charter on Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adding that it was important that the international community constantly reflect on this to ensure that the dastardly act does not happen again anywhere in the world.

Mr. Guterres highlighted the need to ensure that Article 1, 3, 4, 5 and 9 of the Charter on Universal Declaration of Human Rights become enshrined in the hearts of all towards ensuring that the 'Never Again' mantra is upheld and maintained.

Earlier in his welcome remarks, the Vice-Chancellor, Covenant University, Professor AAA. Atayero, represented by the Head, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Dr. Oluyemi Fayomi, said that the compelling vision of Covenant has been to raise a new generation of leaders for the African continent that would go out and preach inclusive governance instead of divisions.

Professor Atayero stated that it was with optimism that the University community and Nigerians hope that the symposium would be stimulating and thought-provoking towards ensuring that war, ethnic cleansing or genocide, never happens under our watch.

During the interactive session, a former Vice-Chancellor, Covenant University, Professor Charles Ayo, said that it was time that Africans use the continent's past to shape the present towards a future that we so desire. He noted that the labels of ethnicity and tribalism should be jettisoned if the world must truly say never again. According to him, "Nigeria cannot afford to go the direction Rwanda went."

The Head, Department of Languages and General Studies, Dr. Tuesday Owoeye, noted that the success story of Rwanda after the genocide is predicated on the quality and resolute leadership displayed by President Paul Kagame, by promoting oneness, nationalism, and patriotism, which are what other polarised nations need, to ensure that bloodbath and genocide is averted.

The event attracted faculty, staff, and students of Covenant University, students from the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), members of the public and the media.

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