

We Failed Rwanda; Let's Stand for the #Rohingya

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Wednesday, July 03, 2013

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Indonesia Muslim Rally

It's been almost 20 years since the Rwandan genocide. We were too stupid, callous, or indifferent to stop it, and [Senator Dallaire has more than a few words on the topic](#).

Granted, the WWW was just getting going in the early 1990s, so we didn't have the kind of viral campaigns we see now, like [Avaaz's campaign to stop the imminent genocide](#) of the [Rohingya](#) in Burma [see below]. It started on Canada/Settler Day and accumulated over 300,000 signatures in less than two days. They're going for 1,000,000.

Genocide is perhaps the surest sign that humanity is reaching for profound depravity.

Why would a country [not issue birth certificates to babies](#) of one cultural group?

How can a people cultivate such hatred? How can a people ignore systematic execution? How can a people be blind to dehumanization? [I wrote about it yesterday](#), with Canada's nice-guy self-concept combined with a studied self-delusion about our generations of abuse of the first peoples.

Maybe that sheds some light on what is happening in Burma. Maybe that also sheds some light on why Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade has sent over two dozen emails about expanding trade relations with Burma in the last 50 weeks, yet only one email that had any reference to the Rohingya. If they are hated for taking away jobs from other Burmese, Canada should stop pouring kerosene on that fire.

Maybe it also explains how [Al Jazeera](#) has some significant coverage of the Rohingya, but how the [CBC doesn't](#).

Whatever the case, the Avaaz platform of viral campaigns for social justice is a proven model, and a welcome development from those who spent the 1980s getting together one Friday each month to jointly

write letters to support Amnesty International campaigns.

Signing on to shine a spotlight on an approaching genocide is a useful act, but it's not a final one. It is an opening act. The rest of your responsibility lies in forcing our government to see ALL Burmese as humans first, not sweatshop labour.

You can let your Member of Parliament know what you want [if you know your postal code](#).

You can let the prime minister, foreign affairs minister, leader of the opposition, opposition foreign affairs critic, Liberal party leader and Liberal foreign affairs critic know what you want them to do to help the Rohingya by emailing this article to these folks, along with your personal message:

romeo.dallaire@sen.parl.gc.ca, stephen.harper@parl.gc.ca, john.baird@parl.gc.ca,

thomas.mulcair@parl.gc.ca, paul.dewar@parl.gc.ca, justin.trudeau@parl.gc.ca,

dominic.leblanc@parl.gc.ca.

Most people didn't know who the Rwandans were until it was too late, and 800,000 of them were dead. Right now, the fate of Burma's Rohingya people is hanging by a thread. Racist thugs have distributed leaflets threatening to wipe out this small Burmese minority. Already **children have been hacked to death** and unspeakable murders committed. All signs are pointing to a coming horror, unless we act.

Genocides happen because we don't get concerned enough until the crime is committed. The Rohingya are a peaceful and very poor people. They're hated because their skin is darker and the majority fear they're 'taking jobs away'. There are 800,000 of them, and they could be gone if we don't act.

- from [Burma: Stop the next Rwanda](#)