

Kwibuka25: Global conference on genocide opens in Kigali

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A two-day international conference on genocide opens today at Intare Conference Arena in Rusororo, Kigali, ahead of the 25th Genocide anniversary due Sunday.

Delegates from around the world, among them, distinguished policymakers, scholars, and media personalities, are expected to take part in the forum that will run under the theme, “Preserving Memory, Championing Humanity.”

According to organisers, it aims to assess a post-genocide society.

“Distinguished scholars and policymakers from all over the world will gather in Kigali to discuss theory and practice in the areas of reconstruction, resilience, dealing with trauma as well as identity politics,” a concept note reads in part.

The first day of the forum will focus on the perspectives of a post-genocide generation. Delegates will discuss the realities of a generational shift in society that has experienced genocide, looking at the lessons, challenges, and threats.

Panelists will include scholars from École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), Université Denis-Diderot, Université du Québec, Trois-Rivières, California State University,

Sacramento, and a filmmaker.

Another session will focus on the role of the State, the Church, and the media in the propagation, polarisation, and disintegration of the social fabric of Rwanda and how it led to the Genocide.

It will explore how ethnic labels polarise societies.

The forum will also look at the imperative of justice with a focus on the necessity for justice in the aftermath of genocide, in the context of nation-building, reconciliation, and fighting impunity.

The discussion will also examine how national and international jurisdictions intertwine to either advance or thwart accountability, and how judicial processes interact with geopolitics and historical memory.

Linda Melvern, a British author and widely published investigative journalist, will be one of the speakers at the conference.

She told The New Times in an interview on Wednesday that there is a continuing campaign to deny the facts of the 1994 Genocide of the Tutsi.

“We know that denial follows every instance of genocide, but in the case of Rwanda, it has been really special, really damaging. The reason is that the

genocidaires themselves were allowed to escape, the main perpetrators were free for many years in some cases," she said.

She asserts that there were too many genocidaires still at large who were able to take part in the campaign to deny the 1994 Genocide, a subject of her next book : Intent to Deceive.

Melvorn indicated that some governments continue to withhold ar-

chive, citing France and the United States of America.

"We know that in France the government has decided to keep the Pandora's Box shut in this case. But it's not only France. In the US there is an enormous amount of material in their archives that we really need to see," she noted, adding that this has been the focus of her 25-year investigation.