

Linda Melvern's new book exposes patterns of Genocide denial

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Linda Melvern speaks at a past event. In her latest book, titled 'Intent to Deceive: Denying the Rwandan Genocide', she warns that the core group of those who organised, paid for and perpetrated the killings remains determined to continue that crime.

British journalist Linda Melvern who last April told The New Times that Genocide denial is everywhere and has to be challenged has published a new book on how masterminds of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi and their supporters continue to deny the atrocities.

Speaking about her latest book, titled 'Intent to Deceive: Denying the Rwandan Genocide', Melvern told Sky News, a British television news channel, that 25 years after the Genocide, the core group of those who organised, paid for and perpetrated the killings remains determined to continue that crime.

"There is a considerable number of Hutu power ideologues who are determined to continue that crime and denial is part of genocide. So, the crime continues with that," she said earlier this week.

She added: "They have mounted an information war against the current government. They have tried

to persuade the world with their disinformation, fake news that the victims, the Tutsi, brought the catastrophe upon themselves.

"They've tried to persuade the world that we have a death toll that wasn't actually a million and there is some research that claims that more Hutu died than Tutsi. This is pure denial."

Asked if there was any evidence that Genocide deniers were succeeding, she said they are citing a 2014 BBC documentary "which produced figures from two American Genocide deniers."

The BBC programme in question, Rwanda: The Untold Story, was broadcast on October 1, 2014 sparking outrage from survivors and scholars, including British author Andrew Wallis, who questioned the ethics of the BBC programme makers.

At the time, 38 international researchers and historians expressed grave concern at the content of the documentary Rwanda's Untold Story, specifically its coverage of the 1994 Genocide.

Denial is atrocious and 'destroys the truth and memory'

In her new book, Melvern traces the origins of the campaign of Genocide denial to those who planned the massacres. "They are ideologues. They really believe in this racist ideology that the Tutsi are not only inferior but dangerous; that they need to be eliminated for the country's sake."

Melvern explains how the génocidaires and their supporters continue to peddle falsehoods, and have found new and receptive audiences, while they continue to fool gullible journalists and unwary academics.

The génocidaires continue to pose a threat, especially to those who might not be aware of the true

nature of their crime, she added.

For Genocide survivors, she said, denial is atrocious as “it destroys the truth and destroys their memory and this is really insulting to them as it continues.”

Denial causes them the gravest offence and ensures that the crime continues.

In her book, Melvern also calls for justice as many of the core group that planned the Genocide are yet to be held accountable.

Asked what she thinks the international community should do, Melvern said: “I think we should all be careful. I think journalists, academics as well should be careful not to be caught in this trap of Genocide denial.”

Reviewing the book on February 25, Romeo Dallaire, a retired Canadian general who served as Force Commander of the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda in 1994, hailed Melvern’s investigative work recalling his own experience with various players in the pre-Genocide extremist government.

“I have no doubt that I was deceived by various players in the extremist government of the time in an effort to distract the UN and the international community from the genocide planning that was taking place.

“Throughout the new year, in the months I was building my force, we were quite aware of significant movement of weapons and of a large number of weapons caches being controlled by extremist elements of the political parties making up the old government.”

‘Indisputable evidence of planned genocide’

Dallaire said that it was only on a tip from an informant that “we learned” that the MRND party and CDR party “were planning to conduct very deliberate killings of members of the Tutsi population on the scale of a genocide.”

“My now-infamous Jan. 11 fax was simply informing the UN that I was going to conduct offensive operations to disrupt the weapons distributions and militia training.

“History has recorded the response I received – ordering me not to intervene – and the consequences of that decision. In *Intent to Deceive*, Melvern clearly

and concisely details the indisputable evidence of a planned genocide.”

The indisputable evidence, Dallaire says, includes cellars full of files and ledgers found in the vaults of the Banque Nationale du Rwanda.

“Here were receipts and invoices for the mass importation of machetes by four companies, not one of them involved in agriculture. Here were the invoices for the low-intensity weapons, cheap to buy and easy to stockpile. Bank statements, faxes and telexes showed money siphoned from international finance to pay for the Interahamwe militia, the money to buy their boots, food for their families and clothing.”

Hate speech broadcast over state radio, Dallaire added, was one of the central tools used to prepare the population for the genocide.

“This vile campaign against the minority Tutsi (denigrating them to “vermin” and “cockroaches” to be “exterminated”) had been relentless over the airways of the now-famous Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines.”

The retired Canadian general and senator goes on to note that, as Melvern explains, “this level of pre-meditation and planned denigration flies in the face of the claim at the centre of the denial campaign: that the massacres resulted from a spontaneous uprising.”

According to Dallaire, Rwanda’s pre-Genocide diplomats abroad “were given instructions to explain that the civilian deaths were the result of this same uprising; these instructions were found later in diplomatic telegrams and cables that were sent by the genocidal Interim Government, a government hastily convened by the killers as their plans got under way.”

From the very outset, he said, “the génocidaires of Rwanda had tried to disguise the true nature of their crime.”

“With cringeworthy accuracy, Melvern also exposes wilful deception – on the part of countries and individuals with everything to lose – to manipulate the next generation into revisionists and genocide deniers.”

“These duped academics, journalists and other “experts” continue to propagate self-serving lies onto the victims, aiming to wreak damage as repugnant as that of the earliest colonialists,” Dallaire added.

Denial, or final genocide stage, “does not end”

According to Dallaire, it is critically important that “we remain vigilant against calculated deceit, the dissemination of misinformation by unwitting dupes and bald faced lies.”

It is an exhausting, upsetting, Sisyphean task, he noted, “but it is essential.” Dallaire said that truth and lies have found new buzzwords recently, such as “gaslighting,” “fake news,” “deflection” and “blame on both sides.”

“Melvern clearly demonstrates how these exact strategies have been (and continue to be) critical components of political deception around the genocide against the Tutsi,” said Dallaire.

“She reminds us that the official stages of a genocide include the final stage: denial. And that final stage does not end. It goes on forever.”

Its purpose, he noted, is: “to destroy truth and memory.”

“Her book does not delve in gossip-mongering, hearsay or bias. It presents the facts. And it behooves us every one to remember them. It is our moral imperative.”

Eugene Eric Murangwa, a Genocide survivor who now lives in the UK, said the new book is fascinating, timely “and everyone must read it.”

He noted that with the ever-growing trivialisation and denial of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, Melvern’s book brings to light the motivations of the deniers.

Murangwa said: “I hope people will learn from the book so that they can stand together with us to combat those determined to deceive the world and, ultimately, destroy our efforts to build a new Rwanda for all Rwandans.”

“I can only say ‘thank you’ to Linda for her courage and bravery to stand with survivors in our mission for keeping memories alive. Together, we can defeat liars and deniers.”

Melvorn has now authored three books about the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi as a result of 25 years of investigative work.

More than a million people lost their lives during the slaughter.

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