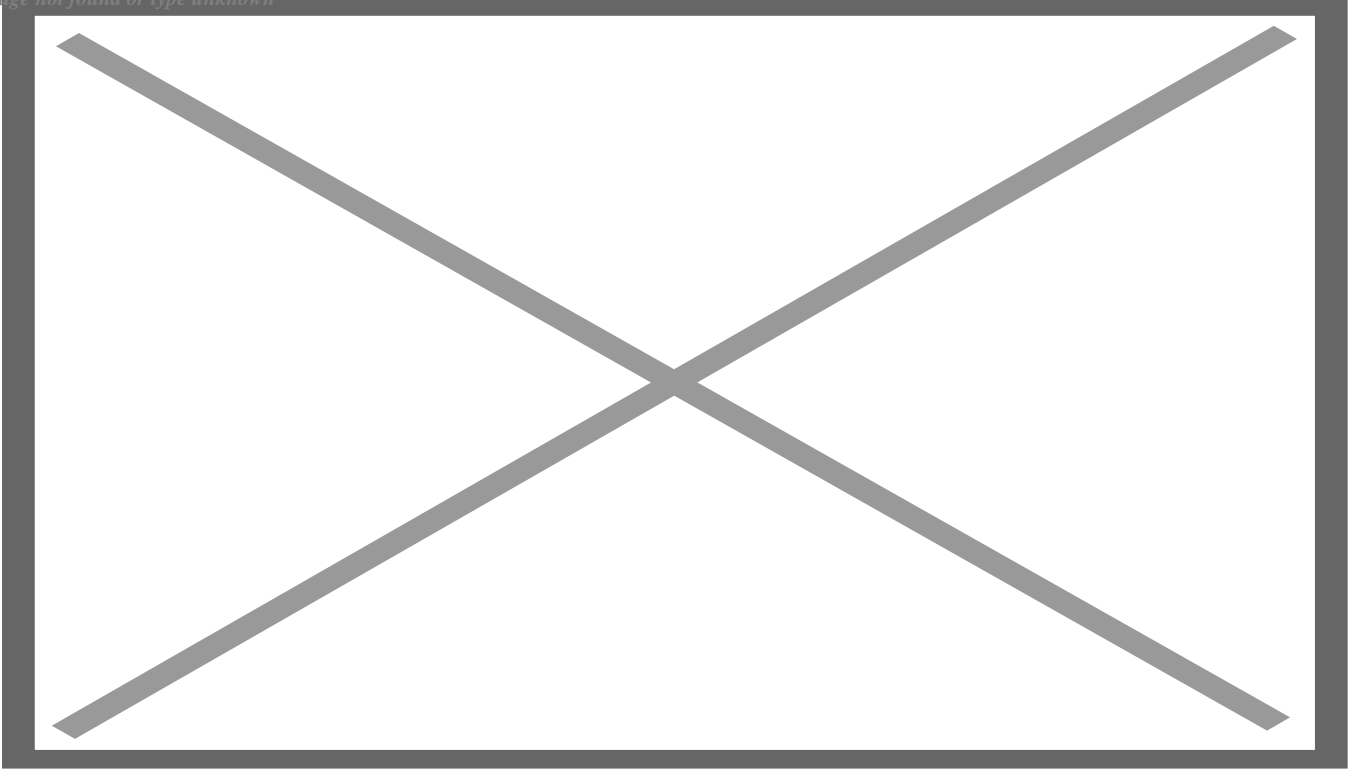


Rwanda: A collective crime

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By Guillermo Alvarado

The past Sunday marked the 30th anniversary of the beginning of one of the most shameful events in the modern history of our species, the Rwandan genocide where in 100 days between 800,000 and one million men, women and children were murdered by the cruelest methods.

The massacre is attributed to Hutu extremists, who took as a pretext the death of President Juvénal Habyarimana during an attack on the plane where he was being transported, and blamed it on the Tutsi population and called to exterminate them by any means.

The facts, in reality, have a deeper root and have to do with the distortions caused in Africa by European colonialism, which introduced there previously non-existent concepts, such as racial superiority, hatred between peoples, discrimination and fear of what is different.

For example, Belgium, the European metropolis in Rwanda, perfidiously classified the inhabitants into different groups, Tutsi, Hutu or Twa, categories that, according to historians, never existed there.

Filmmaker Samuel Oshimwe asks, "we speak the same language, we share the same culture, the same country what has separated us?"

The current borders in Africa were imposed by Europeans, as well as the arbitrary division of peoples on either side of the demarcation lines, and it was they who fueled the hatreds that triggered tragedies.

Moreover, when the massacre began in Rwanda, countries like "civilized" France recognized and armed the Hutus and the Belgians withdrew their troops from there to leave the field free for them.

At the UN, Paris, Brussels or Berlin, the clamor for reinforcements for the UN mission in the African country was ignored or, worse, forbidden to intervene in what they called "old tribal differences."

Butros Ghali, then secretary general of the top organization, spoke of "a civil war of the Tutsi against the Hutu and of the Hutu against the Tutsi", when what was taking place was extermination.

Journalist Ute Schaeffer says that, however, they all knew what was going on and this is shown by the fact that they immediately evacuated their population from Rwanda. The point is, she said, that human rights rank differently in Africa than in Europe or the United States and Canada.

Many of the perpetrators of the massacre were punished, others died before the dock reached them and what is missing is to submit to the judgment, if not of the laws, at least of history, the powers that for years laid the foundations for such painful tragedies to occur.

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