



Pursuing Global Justice
Through Grassroots Change

Yom HaShoah and Darfur: A Reading

In 1978, NBC aired the television mini-series "Holocaust." At the time it was broadcast, Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge were completing the murder of two million Cambodians.

On May 5, 1993, Elie Wiesel spoke at the dedication of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and said, "I have been in the former Yugoslavia last fall. I cannot sleep since for what I have seen. As a Jew I am saying that we must do something to stop the bloodshed in that country!" Two years later, Bosnian Serb soldiers marched into a U.N.-designated safe area in Srebrenica and massacred 7,000 Muslim men and boys as part of a campaign of ethnic cleansing that left hundreds of thousands dead.

On March 21, 1994, "Schindler's List" received the Academy Award for Best Picture. Sixteen days later, the Hutu Interahamwe militias began what would ultimately be the murder of 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu in Rwanda.

It is painful that only 60 years after the Holocaust, the list of horrors continues to grow: from the Ukraine to Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda, Darfur. There is no greater honor to the memory of our 6,000,000 dead than to ensure that we never again add to their number.

Yet, we have just entered the sixth year of an ongoing genocide in Darfur and the atrocities rage on. The violence perpetrated by the Sudanese government and its proxy Janjaweed militia leaves in its wake a humanitarian disaster that may claim many thousands more lives.

Nesse Godin, a Holocaust survivor from Silver Spring, Maryland writes, "[During the Holocaust], my family and I were sent to the ghetto in Lithuania. Somehow, I lived through a concentration camp, four labor camps, and a death march. But this year, as the world is commemorating ... the liberation of the concentration camps, my thoughts are not only about the horrors of Europe's past, but also about Africa's present... about the people of Darfur, Sudan, who need our help. My heart goes out to these human beings who are being attacked because of who they are. As someone who lived through the horrors of the Holocaust, and as a human being who believes we must never forget, I cannot remain silent."

We come together on Yom HaShoah to remember the incredible loss of so many of our people and to keep their memories alive. We cry out as we try to imagine how many could have been saved had the international community intervened. Tonight is not only about memory. We come together to honor our covenant to never again allow genocide to be perpetrated anywhere, at any time, against anyone. Let us not be remiss in our pledge. Let us not feign ignorance. Let us not stand idly by.