

**L3Z3 – Atrocities Gallery**  
**Media Text for the Study Table**

## **The Rwandan Genocide**

Tensions between Rwanda's Hutu majority and Tutsi minority simmered for decades. After a three-year civil war in the early 1990s, they signed a peace accord. Many Hutus were unhappy with the accord.

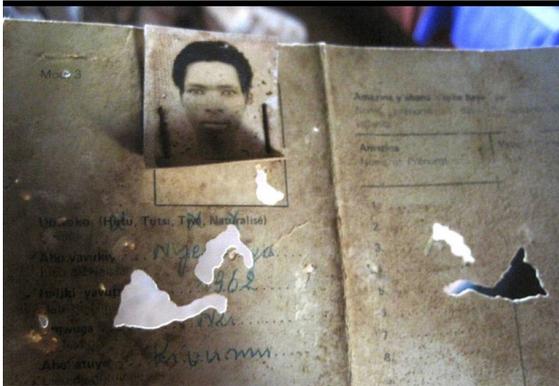
When a plane carrying Rwanda's Hutu president was shot down in 1994, extremist Hutus blamed and attacked Tutsis throughout Rwanda. In just 100 days, they slaughtered about 800,000 Tutsis and many moderate Hutus.

United Nations peacekeepers had warned that a massacre such as this was imminent.

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### **(Stage 1) Build Up**

Tensions between Rwanda's majority Hutus and minority Tutsis stemmed from many causes. These included government practices, laws, and media campaigns that incited hatred.



### **Colonial Legacy**

Rwanda's colonial rulers divided Hutus and Tutsis based on perceived ethnic traits. Rwandans were required to carry identity cards like the one shown here. Each card stated the bearer's ethnicity.

Even after Rwanda gained independence in 1962, the cards remained compulsory.

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## **(Stage 2) Violation**

From April to July 1994, extremist Hutus attacked Tutsis throughout Rwanda. Hutu-controlled media, extremist government leaders, bands of militants and others took part in the genocide that swept the country.

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### **Targeting Tutsis**

Members of Hutu militias (shown) went from house to house looking for Tutsis to kill. They also set up roadblocks to stop people and force them to show their identity cards.

The militants used the cards to identify Tutsis in order to kill them.

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### **No Sanctuary**

“It was no longer important that we found ourselves in a house of God,” said Alphonse, one of the Hutus who massacred Tutsis hiding in Ntarama Church.

A United Nations team later found remains of 400 Tutsis in the church. This photograph shows a

child among the remains.

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### (Stage 3) Distortion and Denial

Before and during the genocide, the international community refused to admit organized massacres were occurring in Rwanda. The world later did recognize the genocide—too late to save the approximately 800,000 victims.

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**AJOR STEFAN STEC**  
peacekeeper on 'Mission Impossible' in Rwanda



The Polish military officer Major Stefan Stec was a peacekeeper with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda in 1994. He was a recipient of the Polish Order of Merit for Bravery, awarded to exceptional courage in Rwanda, Stec risked his own. He was also thanked by the Polish President Wislawa, a singular honor: was tall, strong and with four-strings. He went to Warsaw's Academy at it was wanting to be a scientist but it was the time of the Cold War UN missions, a volunteer for internationalism. He was accepted for training in the Polish peacekeeping centre in Poznan, where most of his time was spent investigating traffic security in Cambodia. Stec was a small and leggy man, described as "pleasant" in his personality, it was intended to be a mission from dictatorship to democracy. Stec arrived in Rwanda in 1994 and said how almost all the UN soldiers called it "impossible". The mission, the lower militia, the human rights time Stec remembered, "coming in the air" but no one could

he had evidence of genocide, the first UN mission officer to use the word. "That we were explicitly forbidden to use the word genocide in our correspondence to New York," he said. Massacres like this would become commonplace. There were an estimated 10,000 people being killed each day. Stec and four fellow officers created a humanitarian Action Cell to coordinate and organize rescue teams. They devised a plan for the creation of secure zones, the coordination of relief agencies and protection of the population. But in New York the Security Council, at the investigation of the UN, had determined that UNMIT be withdrawn, leaving a "token force" to "appraise public opinion" and to negotiate a ceasefire in the renewed civil war.

Stec believed stopping the killing was more important. The rescue and protect missions continued, each one posing a direct threat to the lives of UN soldiers. At one point 5,000 people a day were dying for the want of food and water. The council failed even to send supplies to the remaining peacekeepers. Stec wrote begging cables to New York. "We never got anything," he said. Once he sent one line: "Immediate help necessary." It was for the want of peace but not courage, that more people were not saved. Stec said his loyalty to the UN went beyond mission and he even thought that perhaps he should join the Rwandan Patriotic Front to try to stop the killing.

memoriam, organized by the international student group Never Again, was for that. "To everybody pretends," he said. "The politicians pretend they don't know. The media pretend that they provide us with the truth." Stec made a name for himself with his partner Heather Kliner and, working in computer technology, saved enough money to create the Amaburo Foundation, a charity to assist children in Rwanda, particularly orphans, to advance education and relieve poverty. It proved successful. There were no Polish offices, no salaries, no costly four-by-four vehicles. The foundation had a website designed by Stec, its chief executive officer, and relied on volunteers. One aim was "to connect people of goodwill," which Stec certainly achieved. He continually proved his own mission—so much can be achieved with so little.

The 2004 film *Hotel Rwanda* does not fully recognize the righteous stand and heroism of Stec and his fellow UN officers. It has been Stec who had stood in the lobby of the Hotel des Millie Collines and read the names of those who were to be evacuated to the airport. "I had a Schindler's list of the people we were allowed to save," he said—only those with the right visas to enter Belgium. "A few like to sleep at the St. Pauline Church, 5,000 starving people were trapped. Every night millions came to die. "We did nothing for them because no one there had any visas. . . . There were 66 men alone through-

### Evidence Ignored

Just days after the plane crash that killed Rwanda's president, United Nations (UN) observer Stefan Stec (shown) photographed mutilated bodies and half-burned Tutsi identity cards in a Kigali church yard.

The UN forbade him to call the events in Rwanda genocide.

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### **Choice of Words**

Like most international news media, the *New York Times* initially reported the Rwandan genocide as a tribal conflict and civil war, as in this April 16, 1994 news article.

The choice of words masked the genocidal nature of the killing.

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### **(Stage 4) Breaking the Silence**

The Rwandan genocide reached into every community and through every level of Rwandan society.

International and village-based courts and advocacy groups have worked for years to bring justice and healing to the country's people.

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### **Village Courts**

After the Rwandan genocide, about 100,000 people were charged for crimes committed during the killing. Many trials were held in traditional village-based courts known as *Gacaca*.

During *Gacaca*, victims confront the accused and tell their stories to the community.

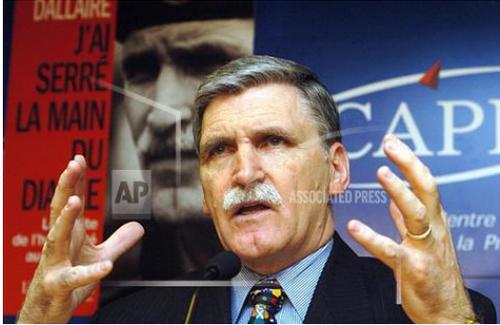
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### **Held to Account**

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda tried former government minister Jean de Dieu Kamuhanda (left) and other key people responsible for the genocide. For the first time, a tribunal held government leaders to account for their role in massive rights violations in Africa.

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### **Bearing Witness**

In January 1994, the United Nations refused to allow Major-General Roméo Dallaire, commander of peacekeeping forces in Rwanda, to act to prevent the Rwandan genocide.

Dallaire (shown) now works to inform people about the events in Rwanda and what we can learn from them.

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