



Forum tackles genocide prevention

A conference in the Canadian city of Montreal has been discussing ways to try to prevent genocide.

Delegates heard from survivors of the Nazi Holocaust, as well as genocidal campaigns in Rwanda and Cambodia.

Many delegates referred to the current crisis in Darfur, Sudan, which has been described as "genocide in slow motion".

"It seems that for the most part the vow of 'never again' was not taken seriously," Payam Akhavan, the conference chair, told AFP news agency.

Esther Mujawayo, a Rwandan woman who lost her mother, father and husband in the 1994 genocide, said she was sceptical about the world's willingness to prevent atrocities.

"Don't tell me you didn't know. The world did know. The world looked away. You knew but did not have the will," said Mrs Mujawayo.

"When the people were evacuating, the French, the Belgians, the Americans, all the expatriates, they even evacuated their dogs and their cats," while Rwandans were left behind, she said.

'Arm opponents'

Much of the discussion at the conference, sponsored by McGill University's law faculty, has centred on how to prevent common aspects of genocides, like media outlets demonising potential victims and foreign bureaucratic inertia preventing intervention.

But a controversial thesis was also presented by the French scholar, Gerard Prunier.

He said the only way to stop government sponsored mass killings was to give military backing to opponents of that government.

"If we decide that in fact what is going to happen is of a genocidal dimension, we have to support, including militarily, the people who are fighting against it," he said.

He told the BBC that would mean arming and assisting the rebels fighting against government-backed militia in Darfur.

Some two million people have been displaced and at least 200,000 have died during the four-year conflict in western Sudan.

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<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/americas/7042729.stm>

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