

# UN blasted at Montreal forum on genocide

**Last Updated: Saturday, October 13, 2007 | 4:39 PM ET**

[CBC News](#)

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The three-day global conference on the prevention of genocide wrapped up its Friday evening session after hearing from activists, survivors and legislators.

Current and former members of the United Nations also spoke about their experiences with the organization, accusing it of being ineffective in preventing genocide and crimes against humanity.

"Looking at broad violations of human rights, or indeed genocide, one has to appreciate that most of us at the UN are sadly, cowardly hypocrites," said Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein, who worked with the UN for more than 11 years and is now Jordan's ambassador to the U.S.

He pointed to allegations of sexual misconduct by UN personnel in several countries, and said the organization lacks credibility to speak on human rights violations.

Also criticized by Al-Hussein was the UN Security Council's quick response to terrorist attacks in Madrid, Spain, in 2004 in comparison with what he said was the silence several weeks earlier when people were massacred in Uganda.

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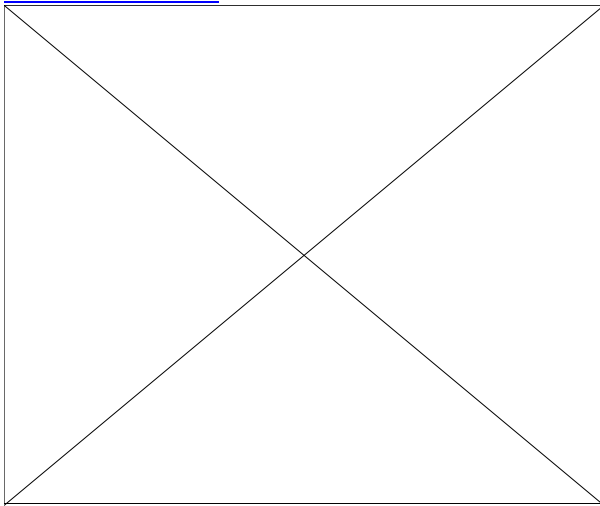
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Part of the problem lies with poor communication between different branches of the UN and insufficient talk about minority rights issues, one of the causes of genocide, said Gay McDougall of the UN-sponsored human rights advocacy group Global Rights.

"Our discourse within the UN institution is very weak, very low on that subject. It's like the 800-pound gorilla sitting in the room," said McDougall of minority rights.

McDougall said often, by the time mass killings begin, it's too late for the international community to react.

Other speakers said that several countries are currently showing signs of moving toward the conditions ripe for a genocide, including Iran, Iraq, Burma and Ethiopia.

President of Genocide Watch, Gregory Stanton, said the process begins when governments begin to classify people and proceeds through five other stages, including dehumanizing the targeted ethnic group.

Stanton said there are already warning signs in comments made by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

"He's saying things that are very similar to what Hitler said in the 1930s," said Stanton.

Stanton is calling for religious groups and schools around the world to get involved in the anti-genocide movement in a global movement similar to the anti-slavery campaign of the 19th century.

But Rwandan genocide survivor Elogie Butera said while he's dedicated to the anti-genocide movement, he is skeptical any changes can be made in his lifetime.

"By the time I leave this world it will probably be the same as the way I came in it," he said.

"The only difference is that I will live with a conscience that I did everything I could to make sure that no other child of 10 years old will have to go through the same thing I did."

Butera's father and a hundred members of his extended family died in the genocide in 1994. He moved to Canada six years ago and now studies law at McGill University.