

Question Period

Frank Chalk: I want to thank the panelists for respecting the time available for their presentation. I felt a little bit, if Martin Amos will forgive me, like Times arrow, striking them down one after another, but actually they helped a lot, and I hope you can help us a lot also by making your questions concise, and as I said earlier, the panelists will try to do the same. I think it would be useful if we took four questions, or we heard four questions first, and then gave the four individuals to whom you address your questions an opportunity to answer them. That way we'll get questions on the floor. We can be thinking about them a little bit ahead of time, and by grouping them that way, we might even have a chance for a second round. So I will ask you, I'm sorry, thank you, I'm sorry, I forgot. Please excuse me, I've overlooked an important step, because I didn't look to my left. I only looked to my right. We have a discussant, who is going to begin by posing two questions for us, or raising two issues for us, I believe. Please go ahead.

Mary Kimani, Internews Rwanda: You're forgiven.

Frank Chalk: Very kind.

Mary Kimani: I want to start by basically trying to put this, for me it has always been a bit hard to understand how media could have played such an important role in what happened. And I want to pose a question to the panel is I've always asked myself, and maybe people here have also asked themselves, how is it that two private media organizations, because we've spoken largely of Kangura and RTL, how could it have been that two private organizations could have had so much of an impact? Was there a culture in Rwanda at the time in the media that supported their efforts? Were there other media organizations that, kind of, broadcast the same, or printed the same kind of articles? Were there people who were countering what they were writing, and why didn't not work? If you could explain to us, maybe the history of the Rwandan media, in brief, and how it helped Kangura and RTL to become so important in what happened in 1994?

Frank Chalk: Who would like to address that question? We can start. Alison?

Alison Des Forges: Well I would say simply that the efforts of these private organizations were echoed by the official structure. The persons who were the investors and the organizers of these private media were, in fact, themselves, major authorities in the political system. They were passing by the private route in order to disguise what they were doing, but everyone knew who was involved, and who was behind it, and it was that which gave a deal of force to what was said. In addition, the radios, for example, RTL at one point said that they estimated they reached 75 per cent of the households of Rwanda at the height of their power. And people listened to the radio all the time, and people who didn't have radios went to someone else's house to listen to the radio. I remember one witness describing how in part of Rwanda, it was difficult to receive RTL, and so he had to climb up on the roof of his house in order to get a clear signal, and he would stand up there on the roof of his house with his radio to his ear listening to

it, and then shouting out to the crowd what was being said, and it's for me this image of the relay from the radio to a person of standing in the community, someone of importance, who then relays the message. This was so clear that in those parts of the country, and we haven't talked about this yet, but there were parts of the country, where people refused, where people opposed the genocide for several weeks. And in some of those parts of the country, one of the measures taken by the authorities was to direct the population not to listen to the radio. So there is a clear measure of its power.

Frank Chalk: Professor Chrétien will also comment.

Professor Chrétien: As was clearly pointed out by Alison Des Forges, they're private run official organizations at arms length from the government. So if I could add something to the answer, there's a source which enables us to identify those responsibilities in democratic press, in the opposition press, where there is criticism about the media, and also in certain initiatives taken by the national union governments. So it wasn't just on the outside that retrospectively there's criticism here of what happened. The criticism came from inside also and at the time.

Mary Kimani: I have a question that would be obviously with Kangura operating from 1990-1994, and publishing cartoons, and publishing The Ten Commandants, and other inflammatory articles, there was clear evidence that you were moving towards a certain trend, and it was not only Kangura. There were other magazines like the Interahamwe. So why did we have to wait until 1994 to do something about incitement in Rwanda? Could there have been anything done before, so that by the time RTLM is coming into the play, people have doubtful attitudes, or questioning attitudes towards the media?

Frank Chalk: Okay Marcel.

Marcel Kabanda: I must say that when Kangura stopped in 1994, it wasn't following a decision, a decision against Kangura. Kangura stopped in '94. The last issue appeared in March, '94, and after April and May, it didn't appear again, and this was no doubt because the conditions of war didn't make it possible to publish. There weren't actually measures taken in order to prevent it from operating. Now the attempts therefore to stop the operation of Kangura, as was pointed out earlier by Jean Chrétien in answer to your earlier question, in other words, were there attempts to prevent it from operating? Yes, with respect to Kangura also in July, 1990, that is two months after it appeared for the first time, Mr. Ngeze was the subject of a trial. He was arrested and put in prison. What's rather paradoxical about this, is that at the time he was discharged for incitement to ethnic division, that was the charge, incitement to ethnic division. The Rwanda government at the time, or at least the Department of Justice was very aware at the time of the risks, of the dangers posed by something like Kangura for the balance, the equilibrium of Rwanda society. So what's paradoxical, it was the Human Rights Organizations, such as Amnesty International, intervened in order to have him released on behalf of the principle of freedom of expression, and when he came out of prison, when he was released, the first issues which came out after that, issues 5 and 6, in which, in fact, you do see the Ten Commandants of the Hutu in issue number 6. So whenever attempts were made, but these

attempts failed, either because of the principle of freedom of expression, or also because of the operation of Kangura really interested the politicians in Rwanda, who didn't want to see it disappear.

Frank Chalk: I want to remind everybody that our session concludes at 15 minutes past 11:00 so we can have a coffee break and time for the second morning session. So, I would like to hear four questions posed from the floor, perhaps one each for each of the panelists. That would be very nice if possible. Please when you stand up, tell us your name, and to whom your question is addressed. It would help if your questions were focused, and not addressed to the entire panel. So let's hear the four questions, and the panelists will note your questions, and I will too, and we'll try and deal with them in order. The gentleman, who looks like Steve Livingston at the mic on my left to begin. Yes.

Steve Livingston: It is Steve Livingston thank you. This is an invitation to Alison to expand on her last question actually, and as I understood it, the question is, who decides when an intervention into hate radio is appropriate? I think that that question needs to be contextualized. We need to recall that, for instance, in a number of instances since then, there have been interventions against media that were, in the view of the Americans, propagating hate. I would call our attention to Serbia in April, 1999, during the Kosovo War, when Serbian State Television was bombed, in Afghanistan in 2001, when Aljazeera offices were mysteriously bombed, presumably by mistake. Aljazeera, of course, was attacked again in the most recent war. There are a number of instances where media have intervened in a violent way. Who decides? And we need to remember how controversial it is when nations, such as the United States decide to take matters into their own hands, and intervene in the manner in which they do. I would invite you then in my question to expand on your very provocative, and I think, important question. Thank you.

Frank Chalk: Thank you. The questioner on my right, who looks strikingly like Sara.

Sara McKinnon: (sic) My name is Sara McKinnon. This is my professor in history of genocide since 1933 at Concordia University, which is why I'm here. And my question is for Binaifer. I was wondering if as scholars of the Rwandan case, have we learned anything about individual people's turning points from when you hear and see images, and hear certain messages coming at you, when does that turn into action, when average, normal, presumably decent people like us will commit horrible crimes against their neighbors and their families?

Frank Chalk: Thank you, and the third questioner.

Wangui Kimartin: (sic) Hi my name Wangui Kimartin, and I'm just a student at Carleton. I just have a question for Binaifer. You said what justice is there for the women of Rwanda, but I'm not sure what, I mean, what can be done. So I would just ask you to elaborate what justice you would provide that there is for the women of Rwanda, who were raped during the genocide?

Frank Chalk: Okay, and our fourth questioner, is there anybody, yes.

?: My question is for Alison. In numerous accounts of the Rwandan genocide, I've read about the role of the media, especially RTLM in fostering ideas of genocide among the Rwandese people, but there's also mention of a rebel-operated radio station. However, there's nothing about it's contents. Could you expand on that please?

Frank Chalk: Did you get that?

Alison Des Forges: Yes.

Frank Chalk: Okay.

Alison Des Forges: Are we going to ...

Frank Chalk: I think we can go right now into, but let's, so you'll begin with Steve's question.

Alison Des Forges: Actually I'm going to dodge Steve's question, because we do have a panel devoted to that this afternoon. So I'm looking for answers myself. I have very few answers to provide on that issue, but I'm looking forward to the chance to hear the opinion of others on it, and yeah, let's save that one for this afternoon if we can.

On the question, the final question asked about Radio Muhabura, which was the radio of the RPF, and indeed, it is accurate that there have been allegations that Radio Muhabura also promoted racial hatred and fear, not incitement to genocide certainly, but that it promoted an atmosphere that called for violence. We don't have the same reservoir of information about Muhabura unfortunately. The texts that I have consulted so far suggest more of a anti-ethicist nationalism, anti-Habyarimana to be sure, but not of the same nature as RTLM. Let me remind you that the ideology of the RPF has been based upon sort of a 1970s revolutionary nationalist ideology, and because of that it is a movement, which defines itself as anti-ethnic and nationalist, and calls itself a family in which everyone has a part. I stress that this is an ideological statement, not necessarily a reality, and that I do not subscribe to it. I'm simply telling you that because this is their ideology, it is not surprising to find that their broadcasts go in that same direction, and that, indeed, during the genocide they went so far as to invite Interahamwe, the militia, the genocidal militia, to cross the lines and join them, which some did. So rather than attempting to exclude, they were attempting to enlarge their base, and include as many as possible.

Frank Chalk: Thank you, and Binaifer would you answer the question regarding research that has been done about key turning points, and the thinking of those who participated?

Binaifer Nowrojee: Sure, I was actually going to roll both questions in, does that make sense? Okay, on the issue of turning point, I think all of us who work in human rights ask ourselves that question, you know at what point do you, does the fear of our differences

make us overcome the commonality of our humanity to do such terrible things to each other, and in each place, and each trigger point is different. I mean I've lived in the United States for a long time, and for me I've watched very closely these last two years, and watching the turning point in the United States, where you see a climate of fear being propagated, our access to information restricted, and that idea of differences and threats of the other become that become this unnamed other, that you see it. You see how quickly a society turns to embrace that fear, and to accept so unquestioningly stereotypes from authorities, and so I feel you know, the Rwandan lesson is a lesson for all of us. I see no difference in the patterns that lead to the Rwandan genocide as I do to the post-September 11th paranoia and anti-Muslim sentiment that you see in the United States. So I feel it's something that all of us as thinking people have to ensure that our commonalities overcome our differences ultimately.

Going to the issue of justice for women, what justice can there be? I mean, of course, this is Rwanda, so nothing is ever simple, not for justice for perpetrators, or justice for victims, let alone rape victims, but I think that, I mean, I see, I spent some time last year in Rwanda interviewing rape victims to get their sense of what they perceived as being justice, and also their views on the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, because as international lawyers we all celebrate this as such a great achievement forward, and I wanted to see from the perspective of a rape victim what the Tribunal looked like. And you know even, obviously the responses were as expected you know, frustration, anger, disappointment, a sense that the tribunal has not delivered justice, but at the same time some sort of unburning desire for it. This idea that still, still, rape victims were looking to the Tribunal for something that deep within us there is that need for public acknowledgement that a wrong was done against us, and you know, the frustration and the anger at the Tribunal really stems from the deep disappointment that it has not delivered. And I think that justice for women can be delivered in two fronts. I think it can be delivered through the law, meaning that the cases should include rape charges. They should be adequately investigated. They should be properly prosecuted, and they should be properly convicted. But I also think that justice has to be a process as well. If we do injustice through the process of delivering justice, we are doing a disservice to genocide victims, and again, the Tribunal has fallen short here. The process is not conducive to getting rape victims to testify, not at the investigative level in terms of interviewing methodology, not in the courtroom in terms of enabling courtroom environment, where in one particularly egregious incident judges burst out laughing while the rape victim was in testimony, and then ultimately in ensuring that these women have information, that they're not just cogs in a wheel. We're not promoting international justice on the backs of genocide victims but that this is a process for them, that we empower them, that we restore their dignity through the process, and we go back and we tell them what has happened once there is a conviction or not a conviction. Thank you.

Frank Chalk: Thank you very. Jean-Pierre Chrétien.

Jean-Pierre Chrétien: Oui.

Just very briefly therefore on the question of Radio Muhabura. I should take this

opportunity also to remind you also of this book on Rwanda. This came out in 2003, and the question is actually addressed, I don't remember the actual page reference, but they do deal with it there. So here we have an interpretation of genocide, the context of which, the responsibilities of which are multiple. Therefore we have to analyze the practices and the content very carefully, without actually trying to balance things out, but at the same time nevertheless quoting the various partners, the various people involved. There was a mission in Kigali in September, 1994, and then there we questioned Bece Bosoma (?), who was an important activist for human rights in Rwanda. And we asked him a question, because we had recordings, we were starting to get recordings of RTLM, but we didn't have any of Radio Muhabura. And he said to us essentially, Radio Muhabura called people to fight against the logic of Hutu power, against the regime. It called on the military to desert, therefore this was part of a civil war logic. But he added also, you won't find there ethnic or racial hatred, unlike RTLM. It's different from RTLM. A number of us recorded that conversation with the gentleman concerned. It's not that much I know. We have to get more evidence. Alison Des Forges reminded us of the ambiguities of the RPF ideology, but you can't deal with a problem only on specific cause sources. But the level of racism in RTLM, this has clearly been documented, so really we can't say the two are the same here.

Frank Chalk: ... and an answer. Yes.

Villia Jeferomous, Queen's University: Villia Jeferomous, Queen's University. I'm interested in a bigger issue, the issue of language and legitimacy that all of you have raised, and I think that it is very powerful and important. The language of the RTLM, and all these kinds of media was the one of legitimacy for a majority, which needed to redress wrongs and protect itself. Let's think now about the current situation in Rwanda and Burundi, and look at the way in which the language is now being used that the minority requires protection, and needs to have its wrongs redressed, and the way in which we have, in fact, international debates on the question of whether or not democracy is the way to go in these countries. Thank you.

Frank Chalk: Okay, who would like to speak to the contemporary situation in Rwanda and Burundi in respect to the demand for adherence to the rights of minorities? Raise your hand if you would like to comment on that. So I know panelists, anybody? Yeah, Marcel.

Marcel Kabanda: The request for the minority to be protected is quite different therefore from the request for elimination of groups. Therefore it's a discussion, it is a mute point. We can discuss it. You might not accept it, but we're speaking out against, what we're speaking out against here is when this language seeks to legitimize, seeks to refuse the possibility of living together, and propose the elimination of a certain group, that the request to, or the demand to protect a minority maybe in a legal framework that you can deal with this in a constitutional framework, but this should not imply a logic of elimination of the minority. That's all I want to say on this.

Frank Chalk: Okay, a word from Jean-Pierre Chrétien ...

Jean-Pierre Chrétien: Well just one word then, well we have to act quickly. It's a question of Rwanda, with a whole history of Rwanda, which you're dealing with here, that is, how can you summarize a tearing apart of society, which was just a prolonged time, and was so torn apart that we really have to consider whether Hutu and Tutsi could really as Rwandans come together again, or as people of Burundi. So the whole problem here is the trap created by genocide, by violence is dreadful, and therefore you can't avoid compromises. If you look at what's going on in Burundi at the present time, you need arrangements. But it's clear that the democracy in the sense in which we understand it, is also a democracy where there are multiple identities, where not everything can be reduced to the fact that you're a Hutu or a Tutsi. So therefore we have to go beyond democracy, but pending that, we have to have arrangements, compromises, we'll begin talk about majority and minority, but it's because of the trap in which those two countries have fallen. Merci.

Frank Chalk: Thank you so much to make this a fruitful panel.

Allan Thompson: Could I just have your attention for 30 seconds. This is going to happen in each panel. This has been an excellent beginning. This is working despite the compressed timeframe. I think inevitably we're going to have people at the microphones at the end of each question period, and what I'm going to suggest, we have a lot of student volunteers, who are journalists, or journalism students. So those who have reached the microphone, and haven't been able to pose their question, please stay there for just a moment. I'm going to have volunteers come, ask you to please give them your question. Tell them who you would like the question to be directed to, and give us a contact, and we will enter these questions into the proceedings of the conference. We'll also relay your questions to the panelists. They can reply to you later, and we'll incorporate this material into the proceedings of the day. So now we'll have our coffee break, and we will return at 11:30 sharp. We will begin. Thank you.