



Anti-Genocide Coffee Break: A Multinational Podcast

Genocide News Now

Episode #5

November 17, 2022

Hello everyone and welcome to Genocide News Now, a weekly news update from the Anti-Genocide Coffee Break: A Multinational Podcast. I am your host Léa Périllat, and you can find us at www.LemkinInstitute.com, as well as on Patreon, Spotify, and iTunes. All the news and action items mentioned in the podcast are available on our website. Now, let's dive into the news.

Our first piece of news comes from the South Caucasus, where **Azerbaijan** launched an invasion of the sovereign state of **Armenia** on September 13. Although the United States was able to broker a ceasefire, Azerbaijan has refused to leave Armenian territory and is currently occupying an estimated 50 square kilometers of Armenian land. This occupation is in line with Azerbaijan's genocidal goals in the region, where it plans to take by force much if not all of internationally-recognized Armenian territory. These goals are furthered and supported by Azerbaijan's ally Turkey, which is a NATO-member. Since August, the Lemkin Institute has written two red flag alerts and one statement on Azerbaijani aggression and the inaccurate reporting of the Western media. We continue to be concerned that NATO members, in search of access to Central Asia and its energy resources, will turn away from the clear genocidal language and aims of the Turkish and Azerbaijani states. NATO members must understand that any support of a new Armenian genocide could result in legal claims based on the 1948 Genocide Convention.

Our second piece of news comes from **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, where elections took place on Sunday October 2nd and during which voters decided the presidency as well as national and regional governments. Back in July, fifty newly identified victims were honored and laid to rest in Potočari as several thousands gathered to commemorate the anniversary of the 1995 Srebrenica genocide. 27 years after the massacre that was carried out under the orders of General Ratko Mladić and the President of Republika Srpska Radovan Karadžić, the remains of three young boys and 47 men were interred at the memorial near Srebrenica where more than 8.300 Bosniaks are already buried.

For this 27th commemoration, Mothers of Srebrenica were honored for their relentless courage and unwavering battle for truth, justice, and peace. Despite their unimaginable burden, they represent some of the strongest voices for peace and fighters for reconciliation in Bosnia, inspiring many in Bosnia but also in the wider region.

This commemoration was held in an extremely tense political and social context in Bosnia, as mentioned in our last episode hosted by my colleague Gretchen Moore. Indeed, today's Bosnian society is still divided and faces genocide denial despite several court verdicts handed down notably by the Hague Tribunal and the Court of Bosnia and Hercegovina. Not to mention that the rhetoric of hate and the glorification of war criminals notably by politicians such as Milorad Dodik and Željka Cvijanović are taking a rising place on the national scene fueling strife and conflict.

This dynamic raises legitimate concern insofar as denial represents an obstacle to the reconciliation process and to enduring peace. Scars will never be mended without a comprehensive recognition of the genocide throughout all the Bosnian territory but also beyond and therefore, we fear that the recurrence of past atrocities is not far away.

Next, we move to **China**, which celebrated the 73rd anniversary of its founding in 1949 on October 1. To mark this anniversary, protesters gathered in cities around the world to protest against the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s ongoing persecution of ethnic minorities and dissidents. There were 15 protests in UK cities alone, where Hong Kongers, Tibetans, and Uyghurs chanted "China lied! People died! Shame on the CCP!"

A long-awaited report by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights recently found that China has committed serious human rights abuses against the Uyghur people and other Muslim minority groups in the Xinjiang province.

Numerous human rights NGOs have accused China of committing crimes against humanity and possibly genocide against the Uyghurs, a Muslim ethnic group, for over a year. These reports have documented the detention of more than one million Uyghurs unwillingly over the past years in a large network of what the Chinese government calls "re-education camps". Reports have also documented that China has been forcibly sterilizing Uyghur women as a way to suppress the reproduction of the group and to undermine its growth. Amnesty International reports that Muslim individuals are being tortured, subjected to systematized surveillance, and forced to disavow their religious beliefs and their cultural traditions.

Based on testimonies of former detainees, individuals who managed to escape and bear witnesses, this draconian and systematic repression of the Uyghurs and other Muslim ethnic groups amounts to crimes against humanity and genocide. The goal of these genocidal policies is to annihilate Uyghur cultural and religious identity and to create a "monoculture based on the Han Chinese ideology and racial identity," to quote from the historian Roy Williams.

Consequently, numerous countries worldwide have declared that China is committing genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang such as the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, the UK parliament, and the European Union institutions. But despite words and trivial economic sanctions, the lack of international reaction has allowed the Chinese regime to continue with its genocidal policies.

Although the former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet claims that "Impunity is an enabler of genocide: accountability is its nemesis", in the case of Uyghur individuals, the international community, chief of which the UN, has remained far too silent and above all completely immobile in the face of the events taking place in this region of China. The lengthy list of crimes serves as an outrageous reminder of the inefficiency of the commitments made by the international community to ensure the protection of all human beings around the world. In this regard, this ongoing genocide represents another painful example of how genocide can happen with almost no resistance from international organizations and actors.

Moving on to our last piece of news of this episode, we shift our focus to **Rwanda** where Laurent Bucyibaruta, a former prefect, has been sentenced for complicity in genocide. The Assize Court of Paris sentenced the former prefect of the Gikongoro province to 20 years in prison. This region of southern Rwanda was the scene of the highest number of horrors and massacres during the genocide that left more height hundred thousand 800,000 individuals dead in Rwanda between April and July 1994 (UN).

Although he was not sentenced for genocide, he was found guilty for being complicit to genocide and crimes against humanity. He was acquitted for genocide because the French Court said they lacked evidence and that there were “no sufficient elements to say that he had given instructions” or that he knew “the full extent of the genocidal plan”.

However, the sentence that has been rendered is based on investigations and testimonies pertaining to four massacres which occurred in 1994. The Court found him complicit during the massacres that occurred at the school in Murambi and the parishes of Cyanika and Kaduha, all of them committed on April 21, 1994.

Although the verdict is given more than 28 years after the genocide committed against the Tutsis by the Hutu Power authorities in government, this conviction is a testament to the will to end impunity, to commemorate the victims, and to prevent the repetition of such atrocities. Holding those responsible to account represents one of the key features of transitional justice, the latter being a powerful instrument to promote a culture of peace and sustain harmony.

That is all we have for this episode of Genocide News Now, (but be sure to tune into future episodes and stay up to date on global news. Be sure to visit our website at www.LemkinInstitute.com for more on our work in the field of genocide prevention and if you would like to take action and make an individual difference, feel free to take a look at our list of resources on our Take Action page on our website. Thank you for listening and have a great day!