



## South Africa to Build Genocide Museum

BY EDWIN MUSONI, 8 APRIL 2013

South Africa is constructing a museum that will have details of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. The museum will also host the Jewish Holocaust (1939 to 1945). Reports from South Africa indicate that the museum is scheduled to open sometime next year during the 20th commemoration of the Genocide against the Tutsi.

According to sources in South Africa, the museum will be an integral part of the planned Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre. Two illustrations of two survivors living in South Africa-Rwandan Xavier Ngabo and Warsaw Ghetto survivor Irene Klass-will be used as part of the Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre's media launch.

Rwanda's High Commissioner to South Africa Vincent Karega told The New Times, yesterday, that his office is currently in touch with the people who are putting up the museum. "We have connected the museum with the National Commission for the Fight Against Genocide (CNLG) requested Rwanda to make a token financial contribution before the end of works," said Karega.

The Executive Secretary of CNLG in a recent interview also told this paper that his office was in touch with the South Africans to see what the Rwandans can contribute. According to Karega, CNLG shall play a role as well as in availing and displaying the material related to the Genocide against the Tutsi.

"Here in South Africa we involve the director of the museum, Tali Nates, in our commemoration events over the years and, in particular, last year, she made a presentation in our official ceremony about genocide and the museum project. She is a friend of Rwanda," said Karega.

He added that Rwandans can as well contribute to the construction of the museum in a campaign dubbed 'Buy a brick'. "The Rwandan section is a prominent part of the permanent exhibition, not an afterthought," said centre director Nates. "It will be a shared museum."

Nates said the message the combination sends is stark: that the Holocaust, and remembrance of it, did not prevent another genocide from occurring. "I don't think that as South Africans and as Jewish South Africans we actually made the connection," the South Africa's Sunday Times quoted Nates as saying.

"You cannot look at the story without remembering that as a South African, you need to make the connection to Rwanda, to the continent of Africa and to the fact that genocide, sadly, did not stop after the Holocaust."

"So I could not, in 2010-2011, establish a Holocaust exhibition within South Africa without looking at Africa," she said. The museum will combine survivors' testimonies with documents, photographs, film, interactive exhibits, text and artifacts.

The exhibition space will take visitors on a route starting with exhibits on racism in general to the South African experience during apartheid to survivor accounts. There will be a memorial courtyard, an exhibition on the Genocide against the Tutsi and an area dedicated to issues facing South Africans today, such as xenophobia.

### Focus on Rwanda:

For the Rwanda section, the centre is collaborating with museums and NGOs in Rwanda, Britain and the US. The exhibit will tell the story not only of the killings, but little-known stories of those who rescued Tutsis from the violence.

The museum is receiving significant help from Proof, a US-based organisation that interviews rescuers in former hotspots such as Rwanda, Bosnia and Cambodia. Describing the Rwandan exhibit, Nates said, "It will be a sizable exhibit with moving images, with colour, and we will use a lot of the voices of the victims, perpetrators, bystanders and rescuers."

The Holocaust exhibit covers the 12-year period from 1933 to 1945, compared to the less detailed 100 days of the Genocide in Rwanda, making Nazi exhibit larger. "It's not a competition in size of story, it's not a competition in suffering," Nates said. "It is about the human connection between the 'Never Again' that we said after the Holocaust and the 'Again and Again' that, sadly, we experienced in the 20th century."

The Rwandan story resonates particularly in South Africa, which emerged from decades of apartheid just as the Genocide in Rwanda took place. Indeed, South Africa's experience with apartheid will form a substantial part of the introduction to the Rwandan exhibition. South Africa is the only country in Africa where the teaching of the Holocaust and the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi are included curriculum.

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