

**SPEAKING NOTES  
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SPEAKER OF THE SENATE**

**ON THE OCCASION OF A LUNCHEON TO COMMEMORATE  
THE 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE RWANDAN GENOCIDE**

**OTTAWA  
APRIL 7, 2014**

Senator Dallaire,  
General Hainse,  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen:

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the Senate and to the Speaker's Dining Room for this luncheon to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide. This is a solemn occasion which offers an opportunity for meaningful reflection and dialogue with the objective of preventing such atrocities from ever happening again.

In 1994, the international community witnessed the failure of humanity in Rwanda. This was not the first, or last, episode of calculated and systematic mass murder in the twentieth century. However, it was among the most brutally violent, seeing the murder of approximately 800,000 Rwandans in just 100 days.

One result is that most people think of the Rwandan genocide in terms of the killing and the widespread use of rape as a weapon. Although it turned Hutu against Tutsi, neighbour against neighbour,

there were many people who demonstrated incredible bravery and selflessness. Many Rwandans exemplified the human spirit at its best during the genocide, and so too did hundreds of Canadians. Our distinguished guests are part of that group.

Some of the people with us today are among those who served under Lieutenant-General, now Senator, Dallaire as part of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda, more commonly known as UNAMIR. In an attempt to stop the violence, and forced to rely on negotiation as their only tool, they marshalled what little support and few resources they had trying to carry out their limited mandate. Along with Dr. James Orbinski of Médecins Sans Frontiers who saved the lives of hundreds, perhaps thousands, these men courageously risked their own lives in the face of unimaginable odds.

Two of our guests – Senator Dallaire and Major Brent Beardsley – were awarded the Meritorious Service Cross for performing in an outstandingly professional manner and according to a high standard, bringing honour to the Canadian Forces and to Canada, for their work during and after the genocide.

These Canadian contributions came at a cost. Many of our soldiers returned home with post-traumatic stress disorder, an issue that Senator Dallaire has spoken about openly with regard to his personal experience. Another UNAMIR veteran here today, Lieutenant-Colonel Stéphane Grenier, also earned a Meritorious Service Cross as the driving force

behind the development and implementation of the Operational Stress Injury Social Support Program. This initiative helps Canadian Forces members and veterans, especially those suffering mental health problems as a result of their service, reintegrate into society and the workforce.

It has not been easy for Rwandans or Canada's soldiers to recover after living through the genocide. As the international community continues to struggle to manage conflicts in countries such as Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Sudan, and Syria, it can be discouraging to see the ongoing suffering caused by ethnic and religious fighting. As we remember the dead, the suffering of the survivors and the many challenges that remain, we must not forget the many people who took great risks during the genocide and who are now doing the hard work of reconciliation on the ground.

At the institutional level, Canada has been involved in justice and accountability measures responding to the genocide through contributions to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (the ICTR). This country has also welcomed many Rwandans as immigrants, providing a safe place to live. At the local level, many Rwandan communities have demonstrated that it is possible to overcome extreme violence and trauma. The country has not seen a repetition of the 1994 levels of violence.

Many groups in Rwanda have brought people together from opposing sides, including genocide widows and wives of men imprisoned for their role in the tragedy, both the survivors and the perpetrators of violence. They have met and spoken about what happened, helping each other to heal. They have built homes for each other and worked in the fields together.

In closing, I would like to thank Senator Dallaire for co-hosting this event and for his tireless efforts to ensure this dark period in human history is not forgotten or repeated. To those gathered here today who gave so much of themselves in Rwanda, thank you for being here.

In 2008, April 7 was designated by the Parliament of Canada as the Day of Reflection on the Prevention of Genocide. In honour of this, let us now raise a toast to a world free from racism, discrimination and intolerance; to a future without genocide, full of peace and hope.