

# Call it genocide

**T**HE UN calls the Myanmar army's aggression against the Rohingya "ethnic cleansing". "Ethnic cleansing" is a term invented by Slobodan Milosevic. It's a euphemism for forced displacement and genocide. It's an insidious term because there is no international treaty law against it, whereas there are international laws against forced displacement and genocide.

"Ethnic cleansing" is not a crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. It has no legal meaning in international law. Another term without legal meaning is "atrocities".

Genocidal massacres are acts of genocide. Genocide is defined as acts intended to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. They include killing, causing serious bodily or mental harm, and inflicting conditions of life on a group calculated to bring about its physical destruction, in whole or in part.

Over 600,000 Rohingya have fled into Bangladesh in the past three months to escape systematic massacres by the Myanmar army that has slaughtered thousands of Rohingya and burned over 500 Rohingya villages to the ground. The killings continue today.

Genocidal massacres are precisely what the Myanmar army and Rakhine militias are committing against the Rohingya. Myanmar is committing both "ethnic cleansing" [forced displacement] and genocide. The crimes often go together. Genocidal massacres are used to terrorise a victim group into fleeing.

Why does the so-called "international community" avoid using the word "genocide"?

Many people think "genocide" requires millions of deaths. Thousands aren't enough.



GREGORY STANTON



People take part in a rally in support of Myanmar's stateless Rohingya minority in the Chechen capital of Grozny, Russia, on September 4, 2017.

PHOTO: REUTERS

But the Genocide Convention outlaws intentional destruction "in part" of ethnic or religious groups.

Lawyers have gutted the word "genocide" by insisting on proof of "specific" intent beyond a reasonable doubt. Some even claim that only a court can invoke the word "genocide".

This view is profoundly wrong. It ignores the very name of the International Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Courts judge genocide after it's over—when it's too late for prevention.

Myanmar's systematic campaign of mass

murder and destruction is surely enough proof of specific intent to destroy part of the Rohingya people.

Those who ignore the power of words argue that "ethnic cleansing", "crimes against humanity" or "atrocities" are just as terrible as genocide.

They're wrong. "Genocide" is a much more powerful word.

Three epidemiologists and I studied the impact of using the words "ethnic cleansing" rather than "genocide" in four genocides: Rwanda, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Darfur. We counted the number of times "ethnic cleansing" and "genocide" were used in *The*

*New York Times*, UN statements, major law journals, and reports by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

Our study concluded:

-Use of the terms has no relationship to the number of people killed. Eight thousand killed at Srebrenica was ruled "genocide" by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. Yet a UN Commission of Inquiry held that over 50,000 killed in Darfur (now over 300,000) was a "crime against humanity" but not genocide.

-The term chosen is determined by the willingness to take forceful action to stop the killing.

-It was not until "genocide" became the dominant term, that force was used to stop it. This tipping point occurred three months into the genocide in Rwanda. The US State Department finally admitted on June 10, 1994 that "acts of genocide" in Rwanda are the same as "genocide". But recognition of "genocide" came too late. Eight hundred thousand Rwandans were already dead.

The same denial emerged in Bosnia. The UN and press called the massacres "ethnic cleansing" from 1992 until the Srebrenica massacre in July 1995. A NATO meeting on July 21 called it "genocide". NATO bombing of Serb forces followed on August 30. Milosevic agreed to a ceasefire, division of Bosnia, and NATO peacekeeping. The Bosnian genocide stopped.

Kosovo was called "ethnic cleansing" until US Ambassador David Scheffer noted "indicators of genocide" on April 7, 1999. Bombing of Belgrade followed immediately, with Serb surrender and NATO occupation of Kosovo.

Darfur is the exception that proves the rule. The UN refused to invoke the G word: "genocide". No military forces were sent to stop the crimes. Instead the African Union and UN sent "monitors" to observe them. The Darfur genocide continues to this day.

The UN avoids the word "genocide" because world leaders avoid military action to stop it.

Genocide is not a sacred or magi word. But when the word "genocide" is used, force to stop it becomes possible. Weaker words like ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity, or atrocities mean that no force will be used to stop the massacres.

Will the UN send troops to protect the Rohingya when they are forced to return to Myanmar? Not if the UN denies that Myanmar is committing genocide against the Rohingya. World leaders will again fail to stop the Crime of Crimes.

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## NFL DEBATE

# What happened to Colin Kaepernick's message?

LAVINA AMBREEN AHMED

**I**T never ceases to amaze me how quickly important news stories fade away from the media only to be replaced by new events and happenings. Just a month ago, the National Football League of the US, better known as the NFL, dominated the news all over the globe for the "take the knee" movement that spread across the US. After a few weeks of heated debates, the topic has almost disappeared from

brutality faced by African Americans and people of colour in his country.

While Kaepernick attracted both supporters and detractors for his form of protest and ultimately lost his job with the NFL, his action kicked off a movement about a couple of months back when President Donald Trump lashed out against the NFL. The American president suggested that the NFL should fire any player who doesn't stand during the national anthem. He stated that not standing during the

which many players considered to be "divisive". After about two weeks of discussions the issue faded away and the movement was waning with only a handful of players protesting. Then the issue resurfaced when Bob McNair, owner of the NFL team Houston Texans, made a comment at a NFL owners' meeting saying, "We can't let the inmates run the prison," referring to the protesting African American NFL players as "prison inmates". A large number of NFL players are African Americans.

Amid all the sound and fury and the never-ending saga centred on the NFL, Colin Kaepernick's message got lost. What was the athlete protesting for in the first place? Why did it all start? Why has the focus shifted from the main message? In a post-game interview last year Kaepernick said he refused to stand during the national anthem because of his views about the treatment of racial minorities in the US. "I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of colour," Kaepernick said. "To me, this is bigger than football and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way. There are bodies in the street and people getting paid leave and getting away with murder." Kaepernick was referring to the high number of African Americans being fatally shot by police officers on the street.

The NFL games are extremely popular in the US and Kaepernick wanted to use that as a platform to take a stand against racial discrimination and social injustice. But too much attention has been given to his refusal to stand during the anthem instead of focusing on the issue of why Kaepernick was protesting in the first place. Law enforcement officials killed at least 223 African Americans in the year after Kaepernick first started the protest, according to a Huffington Post article published on August 24, 2017, that used data com-

pled by *The Washington Post* and *The Guardian*. Many of the victims were unarmed.

Interestingly, when Kaepernick started his protest a year back, not many NFL players openly supported him. It was only after President Trump made his comments about NFL's protesting players that many NFL players, coaches and some owners joined the "take the knee" movement and expressed solidarity with Kaepernick.

Kaepernick's critics say that his action was "selfish", he is creating a "distraction" and simply seeking attention. They think he has lost his form and "take the knee" was a publicity stunt.

Now even if that were true, the fact is that what he is protesting against is something that is irrefutable. Social injustice and racial discrimination are very prevalent in American society and culture. Kaepernick is not simply protesting against systemic racism in the US by taking a knee, he is on a mission to raise awareness about racial inequality among young people.

Last year, he pledged to donate USD 1 million in USD 100,000 increments in ten months from his salary and sales of his jersey to organisations that work with oppressed communities. It's worth mentioning that Kaepernick hasn't received a paycheck from NFL since his contract with NFL ended this March.

Even though he wasn't on the team, Kaepernick's jersey sold more than the jerseys of his former teammates from San Francisco 49ers, between the

months of March and May. He has almost fulfilled his pledge by donating more than USD 900,000 so far. The list of organisations that received donations from him can be found on his website [www.kaepernick7.com](http://www.kaepernick7.com). He started the Colin Kaepernick Foundation that is dedicated to end oppression of all kinds globally through education and social activism. He funded a free campaign called "Know Your Rights" for young people

which aims at raising awareness through higher education, self-empowerment and instructions to properly interact with law enforcement in various situations. Despite facing harsh criticism for being an "attention seeker", GQ magazine featured Kaepernick on the cover of their "Men of the Year" issue that came out this month, naming him the "Citizen of the Year" in 2017. The title of the story reads "Celebrating the Man who became a Movement."

While NFL talks might be fading away from our newsfeed, another alarming news came to my attention this month. On November 2, a retired New Jersey police chief, Frank Nucera Jr, was arrested on a hate crime charge for making racist comments against African Americans while on duty. According to media reports, the retired police chief of Bordentown, New Jersey, a predominantly white New Jersey township, made a comment that African Americans had "no value" and that they were "like ISIS" and suggested putting them before a firing squad. He instructed his officers to position police dogs at high school basketball games to intimidate young African American students and regularly used racial slurs to describe them. This is precisely the kind of racial discrimination Kaepernick is protesting against.

While we don't know how successful Kaepernick's mission will be, there is no denying the need for it and, more importantly, the need for more people of every race, ethnicity, faith and political view to speak up against racial discrimination and police brutality every time it happens. Kaepernick took the lead and sparked a movement. The rest is up to his fellow Americans, because Kaepernick is correct—racial discrimination and police brutality are bigger than football.

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Colin Kaepernick sparked the "take the knee" movement when he refused to stand during the US national anthem in protest of racial injustice and police brutality.

PHOTO: AFP

the news reports and editorial columns. And because we don't see it in our daily newsfeed, we've stopped talking about it. That is how short-lived a news story is in the age of social media.

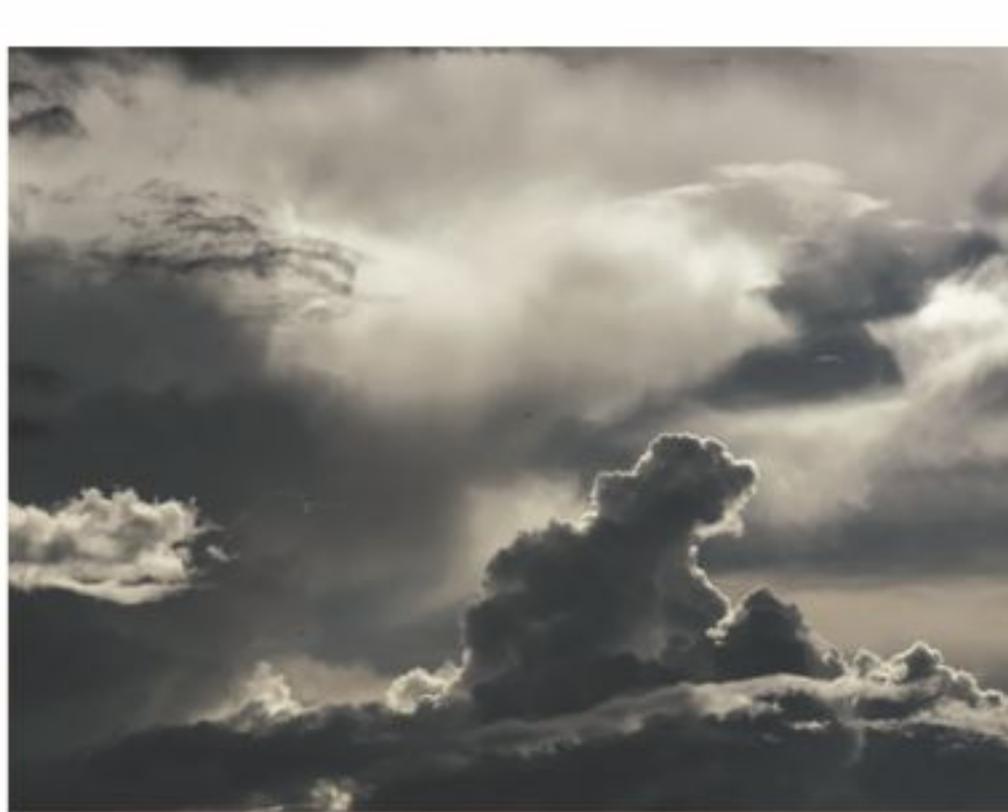
The "take the knee" movement started last year on August 26 when Colin Kaepernick, former San Francisco 49ers quarterback, refused to stand during the American national anthem before a game. His refusal was in protest against racial inequality and police

anthem is showing disrespect to the flag, the US military and the country.

The president's backlash against NFL players sparked a massive uproar that inspired 32 NFL teams across the US to join Kaepernick's "take the knee" movement. More than 200 NFL players were seen kneeling during the anthem, standing with locked arms or with their fists in the air in solidarity with Kaepernick and in defiant protest against President Trump's message

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## A WORD A DAY



A DAY

CALIGINOUS

Adjective

Dark, dim or misty.

### CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

**ACROSS**

- 1 Propose
- 6 Argo captain
- 11 Mother of Pebbles
- 12 Love to pieces
- 13 Sphinx setting
- 14 Comedic tribute
- 15 Article
- 17 Debate group
- 18 Crisply fragrant
- 20 Opposed
- 22 Nest item
- 23 Used a mirror
- 26 Rapper's entourage
- 28 Painter Degas
- 29 Was behind
- 31 Next-to- last letter
- 32 Golden Rule word
- 33 Make ready
- 34 Browser button
- 36 Indian dress
- 38 Tottering
- 40 Parish leader
- 43 Caesar's land
- 44 Last letter
- 45 Fresh
- 46 Like a snoop
- 49 Fauci problem
- 50 Dawn goddess
- 53 First-rate
- 54 Diamond clubs
- 55 Open space
- 56 Stratford river
- 57 Put down
- 58 Evaluate
- 59 Was behind
- 60 Next-to- last letter
- 61 Make ready
- 62 Browser button
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