

### **Activity 9. Is what happened in Rwanda genocide?**

**Instructions:** Political considerations often determine which events are classified as genocide. Read the excerpts from the 1994 and 1998 *New York Times* articles discussing the position of the Clinton administration on events in Rwanda and answer questions 1 – 3.

#### **Questions**

1. What was the position of the Clinton Administration toward events in Rwanda in 1994?
2. What did President Clinton say about these events in 1998?
3. In 1998, President Clinton says that nations should learn from the past. What do you learn from comparing these two articles?

#### **A. Officials Told to Avoid Calling Rwanda Killings 'Genocide'**

By Douglas Jehl, *The New York Times*, June 9, 1994, A8

“Trying to avoid the rise of moral pressure to stop the mass killing in Rwanda, the Clinton Administration has instructed its spokesmen not to describe the deaths there as genocide, even though some senior officials believe that is exactly what they represent. That decision has left the Administration at odds with the Secretary General of the United Nations and a cast of distinguished experts who say there is no doubt that the violence, which is said to have killed at least 200,000 people and perhaps as many as 400,000, is part of the deliberate and widespread extermination of an ethnic group. But American officials say that so stark a label could inflame public calls for action the Administration is unwilling to take. Rather than compare the massacre with, for example, the deaths under the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, the State Department and the National Security

Council have drafted guidance instructing spokesmen to say merely that “acts of genocide may have occurred.”

### **B. Clinton Declares U.S., With World, Failed Rwandans**

By James Bennet, *The New York Times*, March 26, 1998, A1

“President Clinton came here today to talk to scarred and mutilated survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and to acknowledge that the world could have protected them, though it did not. ‘We in the United States and the world community did not do as much as we could have and should have done to try to limit what occurred in Rwanda in 1994,’ the President told half a dozen people here who lost parents, siblings and children during three months of ethnic mass killing that claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. After listening to the victims’ stories of hiding among blood-soaked corpses, of being sliced with machetes, and of watching hundreds die, Mr. Clinton said in a later speech that ‘we cannot change the past,’ but that nations should learn from it. Both in his meeting with the victims and the speech to an invited audience here, Mr. Clinton called for sharper vigilance against genocide and swifter prosecution of its perpetrators in a new permanent international criminal court.”