Getting away with murder: genocide and politics

April 2013

Mukesh Kapila , Vanessa Pupavac and Rony Brauman introduced a discussion on countries seeming to get away with genocide, chaired by James Thompson

In January 2012, the French Senate voted for a bill with cross-party support to make it a criminal offence to deny the mass murder of Armenians in 1915 was genocide. Anyone who 'outrageously' questions the official version of events would face a one-year prison sentence. The French Constitutional Court quashed the bill, saying it represented an 'unconstitutional attack on freedom of expression'. Nonetheless, the European Framework decision on Racism and Xenophobia says genocide denial or gross trivialisation should be a crime in all EU member states. As well as France, a number of member states have rejected this, including the UK, the Netherlands, Italy, Denmark, Sweden and Spain. Their rejection reflects an ongoing dispute about whether historical truths should be treated as legal truths.

Some background readings

Misanthropy Without Borders: The International children's Rights Regime , by Vanessa Pupavac, Disasters 2001

Human Security and the Rise of Global Therapeutic Governance , by Vanessa Pupavac, 2005

Framing Post-Conflict Societies: An Analysis of the International Pathologisation of Cambodia and the Post-Yugoslav States , by Caroline Hughes and Vanessa Pupavac, 2005

In the waiting room of the Rwandan genocide tribunal , by Barrie Collins, spiked 26 May 2006

Rwanda journalists jailed for genocide denial launch supreme court appeal , by Owen Bowcott, Guardian 29 January 2012

The End of the Development-Security Nexus? The Rise of Global Disaster Management , development dialogue No. 58, April 2012

See No Evil: How did genocide denial become a doctrine of the internationalist left? by George Monbiot, 21 May 2012

Watch video of discussion, thanks to Dan Clayton the documentary film maker from Leeds for

producing this.

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