

# UN Failed Rwanda,

**By Nicole Winfield**

**Associated Press**

**December 16, 1999**

United Nations – A report assessing United Nations involvement in Rwanda said on its release Thursday that the UN and its member states failed Rwanda in deplorable ways in 1994, ignoring evidence that a genocide was planned, refusing to act once it was under way and finally abandoning the Rwandan people when they most needed protection.

The independent report, commissioned by Secretary-General Kofi Annan, showed a UN peacekeeping mission in Rwanda doomed from the start by an insufficient mandate and later destroyed by the Security Council's refusal to strengthen it once the killings began. And it showed UN officials – Annan and then-Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali among them – unable or unwilling to act on information from the field that a massive slaughter was occurring and that they needed to do something to stop it.

Coupled with another self-critical analysis of the UN role in the fall of Srebrenica during the Bosnian war, the report is sure to fuel the growing international debate about the imperative of the United Nations and its member governments to stop grave violations of human rights.

In a statement, Annan acknowledged the systematic failure of the United Nations and expressed his "deep remorse" on behalf of the organization. Annan, who was head of UN peacekeeping operations during the genocide, commissioned the report to find out the truth about the UN role in the massacre and to learn from the mistakes. He appointed a three-man team to conduct the 6-month-long analysis, and turned over UN files, cables and archives as well as UN personnel for testimony.

The report stated, **"Our conclusion is there is one overriding failure which explains why the UN could not stop or prevent the genocide, and that is a lack of resources and a lack of will – a lack of will to take on the commitment necessary to prevent the genocide."**

The United Nations launched its peacekeeping mission for Rwanda in October 1993 to monitor a cease-fire agreement between the Rwandan Hutu government and the rebel Rwandese Patriotic Front. The mission, which was not allowed to use military force to achieve its aims, was limited to investigating breaches in the cease-fire, helping humanitarian aid deliveries and contributing to the security of the capital, Kigali. The mission proved insufficient after the government launched the slaughter of an

estimated 800,000 minority Tutsis and moderate Hutus following the downing of the Rwandan president's plane on April 6, 1994.

The report faulted the United Nations in several key areas leading up to that date, including **its failure to act on a now-famous cable sent by the force commander, Canadian Lt. Gen. Romeo Dallaire on Jan. 11, 1994 warning of the risk of genocide.** The cable was received by Annan and wasn't shared with the Security Council and didn't receive the follow-up such an important piece of evidence deserved, the report said. In addition, the United Nations and Security Council virtually ignored a groundbreaking assessment by the UN human rights investigator for Rwanda who raised the possibility in August 1993 that a genocide might occur.

But the report points most of its criticism at how the United Nations – and in particular its Security Council members – reacted to the killings once they started. There was little political will within the council, particularly from the United States, to authorize a robust peacekeeping force in the months after the failed Somalia mission, that left 18 Americans dead. After rampaging killers in Rwanda killed 10 Belgian peacekeepers at the beginning of the genocide, there was little will to keep the peacekeepers in place, much less strengthen their mandate.

The departure of peacekeepers from a school where thousands of civilians had massed hoping for protection was cited by the report as one of the main reasons for the enduring bitterness Rwandans feel Thursday toward the United Nations because of the ensuing massacre there. "The manner in which the troops left, including attempts to pretend to the refugees that they were not in fact leaving, was disgraceful," the report said.

The report made 14 key recommendations, including calling for the U.N. chief to initiate an action plan to prevent another genocide. It also recommended the United Nations apologize to Rwanda.