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Conference unites those giving a voice to victims of atrocities around globe

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**BODY:**

Beloit - Close to 100 people spent Saturday at Beloit College considering mass graves in Iraq, executions in Srebrenica, 1.2 million people murdered, raped and maimed in Sierra Leone - and the fight for justice that follows such atrocities.

"Mankind has done itself in in the 20th century. I'm being a little bit conservative, but over 235 million human beings died in the 20th century; 135 million died at the hands of their own government," said David Crane, former prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

"Millions of people around the world have died and their last thought has been, 'I hope there is justice,'" said Michael Newton, a professor at Vanderbilt University Law School in Nashville, Tenn., who served as an adviser to the judicial chambers during the Iraqi Special Tribunal.

The daylong conference, "Transitional Justice: Accountability in the Wake of Mass Atrocities," brought together many who have worked on the front lines of war crime and genocide tribunals around the globe.

The event was held in conjunction with the college's Weissberg Professorship in International Studies, given this year to Richard Goldstone, a former justice for the Constitutional Court of South Africa who served as chief prosecutor for Yugoslavia tribunal.

Participants heard discussions about the role of politics in the search for justice and the complications involved in prosecuting heads of state such as Saddam Hussein in Iraq, Slobodan Milosevic in the former Yugoslavia and Charles Taylor in Sierra Leone.

Newton did not address the controversial scene of Hussein's execution but spoke of how Iraqis carried out the tribunal, holding international law above their own.

Participants also heard from David Scheffer, former U.S. ambassador for war crimes, who said the U.S. must ratify the treaty establishing the international criminal court, and do so in time to enter the discussion of possible amendments in 2009.

He cited a recent poll that found 74% of Americans favoring U.S. involvement in the court.

But it was the discussion of political will that seemed to frame the other issues.

"Too many people forget about the politics. Without the politics these things just don't happen," Goldstone said. "Without the politics there wouldn't have been a Nuremberg trial."

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In the former Yugoslavia, he said, the will came about in part because of what he called "the CNN factor," the transmitting of photographs of emaciated men behind barbed wire fences - images that called to mind photos from Nazi concentration camps.

Although the tribunals in the former Yugoslavia cost some \$148 million, Goldstone said the price was relatively cheap.

"I have little doubt that the cost of the bombing in Yugoslavia over Kosovo in 1998 - the bombing must have cost some \$50 million to \$60 million a day, to kill people, to use military force," he said. "So when one talks about \$148 million for the Yugoslavia tribunal, that's the cost of two or three days of using military force."

Even though Milosevic would eventually die four years after his trial began, before a verdict, his trial left a graphic historical record, including videotape of the executions in Srebrenica.

By contrast, Cambodia has waited 27 years for justice, said Gregory Stanton, director of the Cambodia Genocide Project.

"It's a long time," he said, "but the political will has been engaged, and it is God's work."

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