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Jacqueline Murekatete Visits Israel and Raises Awareness of Darfur Crisis

NEW YORK, July 8, 2007 – Jacqueline Murekatete, 22-year old youth leader and survivor of the 1994 Rwanda genocide, presented her personal testimony at a conference on the Darfur crisis on June 25 at Tel Aviv University in Israel. Organized by the Harold Hartog School of Government and Policy and sponsored by the Pears Foundation, the public event raised awareness about the situation in Darfur, humanitarian assistance provided by Jewish and Israeli organizations to refugees in Chad, and the issues related to the influx of refugees to Israel.

“As a survivor it is difficult to once again see that innocent people are being killed and that the international community is doing very little to end the situation. When I read about Darfur, watch TV and learn about men being killed and women being raped, I am taken back to 1994, when my own country, Rwanda, experienced one of the worst genocides in history,” said Murekatete.

Murekatete’s central theme was the danger of silence and indifference. “There is no way that years from now we will meet somebody, perhaps a child from Darfur, and tell her that we didn't know... because we do know. And, as people who know, we have a responsibility to speak out on behalf of the people who are being killed. Let us not be silent and indifferent to their suffering.”

Keynote speakers included Ruth Messinger, President of American Jewish World Services (AJWS), who spoke about AJWS humanitarian assistance and advocacy program to aid Darfurian refugees, and Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, Israel’s former Chief Rabbi and Tel Aviv’s current Chief Rabbi, who spoke about the Jewish imperative to help a person in need, regardless of race, religion, and/or gender.

Murekatete traveled to Israel to promote the work of Jacqueline’s Human Rights Corner, a partner initiative with the non-profit youth empowerment organization Miracle Corners of the World. This initiative raises funds and awareness to support children, women, and families in Rwanda affected by the 1994 genocide and promotes genocide prevention education.

Immediately following the Tel Aviv University event, Murekatete was inundated with requests for interviews, and meetings, including one with Aliza Olmert, Israel’s first lady. She was interviewed by Israel’s largest media group, Y-Net, as well as the English daily *Jerusalem Post*. She was also featured on Israel’s leading news shows in both Hebrew and English.

Less than 24 hours later, an Israeli youth movement brought more than 100 young community leaders together at their Tel Aviv headquarters to listen to Murekatete’s testimonial. “As Israelis, who grow up hearing the personal testimonies of Holocaust survivors, it was very powerful for us to hear the story of a young survivor from Africa,” said Boaz Albert, a youth group member. “At the same time, it is inspirational for us to hear that Jacqueline is devoting her life to preventing future genocides and to trying to help survivors live better lives in Rwanda.”

Murekatete also met with organizations and individuals involved in genocide prevention education and humanitarian activities in Rwanda. She toured Yad Vashem and spoke with representatives from the education center on the need to introduce other genocides into Israel’s curricula. After speaking with more than 200 people at Tel Aviv’s largest reform synagogue, Beit Daniel, she addressed a masters’ class on disaster management at Tel Aviv University. She also traveled to the Carmel Mountains to visit the Yemin Orde Youth Village, home to disadvantaged youth from more than 20 countries. Among many other stops on her first visit to Israel, Murekatete met with refugees from Sudan living with their children in a women’s shelter in the north.

About Miracle Corners of the World – MCW was founded in 1999 as a nonprofit organization serving youth around the world, primarily through programs of Youth Leadership Training, Community Center and Housing Development, and Healthcare Outreach. MCW’s mission is to empower youth worldwide to become positive agents of change in order to help improve their own lives and contribute to their communities. MCW achieves its mission by working in close cooperation with a diverse network of public and private sector partners. For more information, visit the MCW website at www.miraclecorners.org.

About Jacqueline’s Human Rights Corner – In partnership with MCW, Jacqueline Murekatete founded Jacqueline’s Human Rights Corner in April 2007 on the occasion of the 13th anniversary of the 1994 Rwanda genocide. The mission of this new initiative is to prevent future genocide through programs of awareness raising and education. The initiative also aims to raise funds and awareness in support of children, women, and families in Rwanda affected by the 1994 genocide and to promote genocide prevention education. To learn more, click here http://www.miraclecorners.org/programs_partner_jacqueline.htm

About Jacqueline Murekatete: Jacqueline Murekatete is internationally recognized for her work as a youth leader and humanitarian, speaking out for victims and survivors of genocide, challenging youth and adults around the world to remember, to fight indifference, and to coexist. Born in Rwanda in 1984, Jacqueline was not yet ten when she lost her immediate and extended family in the 1994 genocide. Since then, her journey has taken her from an orphanage in Rwanda to a new home with her uncle in the U.S. In 2003, Jerry Seinfeld’s Foundation offered her a full scholarship to attend New York University for four years. In May 2007, she graduated cum laude with a bachelor’s degree in Political Science.

In the past five years, Jacqueline has conducted more than 300 presentations nationwide, from schools and universities to conferences and the United Nations General Assembly. Independently and with frequent co-presenter and Holocaust survivor David Gewirtzman, among others, Jacqueline’s story has been featured in the *New York Times*, the U.N Chronicle, the *Washington Times*, *Newsday*, *People*, *Glamour*, *Teen Vogue*, NPR, Voice of America, CNN, PBS, NBC, ABC, MTV-U, Polo Ralph Lauren GIVE campaign, and other leading media outlets worldwide.

For her work, Jacqueline has received such prestigious awards as the Global Peace and Tolerance award from the United Nations, the Scandinavian Sprit award from the American Jewish Committee, the Ina Kay Humanitarian award from the Anti-Defamation League; and in May 2007 NYU Alumni Award for Excellence in Scholarship and General Attainment at the 175th commencement ceremony.

To read some of the coverage Murekate received in English and Hebrew, click here:

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?apage=1&cid=1183459188502&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

http://www.israaid.org.il/story_page.asp?id=1099

<http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3417290,00.html>

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