

# Pure Massacre:

**Aussie soldiers reflect on the Rwandan Genocide**

Kevin O'Halloran

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22nd April 1995 – 22 April 2010 (15 year Anniversary); Kibeho Massacre, Rwanda

*"We are all obviously very proud of how we performed in Rwanda and believe it's very sad that people don't talk much about the operation because it implies that we did something wrong, which we all know is not true. On this 15th Anniversary of Australia's UN operation in Rwanda, my book aims to serve as a small part of the healing process for those veterans who said how good it was to talk about their experiences there."*

**Author and Platoon Sergeant in Rwanda, Kevin "Irish" O' Halloran**



Fifteen years ago, on 22 April 1995, at a displaced persons' camp in Kibeho, in full view of Australian UN peacekeepers, over 4,000 unarmed men, women and children died in a hail of bullets, grenades and machete blades at the hands of the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA). Constrained by the UN peacekeeping Rules of Engagement, these Australians could only watch as atrocities they'd never imagined were carried out in front of them knowing that they could not — would not — interfere with these brutal acts.

Up until now, the Australian public have had limited access to first-hand accounts from these soldiers regarding what actually occurred in Rwanda.

Author Kevin "Irish" O'Halloran, a Platoon Sergeant at the time, has not only drawn on his own personal experiences, but others who served with him. Before 'Irish' and his platoon was deployed to Rwanda, he learnt as much as possible about the long history of bloodshed between the Tutsi people and Hutus, the civil war, the 1994 genocide and the part the UN was playing in trying to rebuild the country, so he knew, or thought he did, what he was getting his men into. It was a daunting picture.

Irish takes the readers with him into his world at "Club Med Kigali", where there was no running water so bathing became a weekly not a daily occurrence, on daily morning runs through Kigali backstreets passing RPA units with many of the RPA soldiers in a drug-induced state, chanting war songs and feeling invincible, to the escalating tension and violence leading up to the massacre at Kibeho and accounts of the aftermath. He also stresses the weakness of the UN charter and the lack of recognition for those who served during this tragic time.

More than 600 Army, Navy and Air Force personnel from the Australian Defense Force were sent to Rwanda as part of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR). The operation was predominately a medical one and their role was to provide humanitarian aid and security for the return of the displaced persons to their homes. However, these Australians would be exposed to a lack of humanity they were not prepared for and found hard to fathom.

It takes a special type of bravery, discipline and compassion to do what these soldiers did. Little did they know, when the second tour of Rwanda was over, that they would be the highest decorated UN peacekeeping contingent since the Korean War. For many, their service in Rwanda would come with a personal toll. No Australians died during and immediately after the massacre at Kibeho, but as *Pure Massacre* testifies, the suffering and tragedy is embedded in their memories.

Irish expands upon, *"For many this book is the first time soldiers have spoken so comprehensively, in such depth and at such length about Kibeho. Some have opened up about things they have never communicated to their families. Each personal account could be a book in itself."*

The diverse perspectives of the Australian service personnel who served in Rwanda at this time provides a new and personal voice to the Kibeho massacre and what happens when "good men do nothing".

**Kevin "Irish" O'Halloran is available for interview  
Contributors to Pure Massacre are also available for interview.**

**Big Sky Publishing; rrp: \$34.99; 288 pages (includes 32 pages of colour photos); ISBN: 978-0-9803251-8-8**

**For further information, please contact Jackie Evans, Publicist,  
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## PURE MASSACRE ALSO INCLUDES:

- In-depth research into this mission, including responses from a questionnaire sent out to soldiers. These first hand accounts are raw, honest and not a cleansed over version by politicians or UN bureaucrats. (see Chapter 7 Pure Massacre and Chapter 8 Medics in the Maelstrom)
- The history of the Tutsi people and Hutus dating back 500 years and the conflict in Rwanda (see Chapter 2)
- The details of the 1994 Rwandan Genocide, including a moving first hand account from survivor Leatitia who is now living in Australia (see Chapter 3 One Million Die in 100 days)
- Facts on the formation of the United Nations, their involvement in Rwanda and the peacekeeping mandates it applied (see Chapter 4, When Good Men Do Nothing, Chapter 5 Un Mandate Unamir, Chapter 10 Our Hands Were Tied & Chapter 11 Where's the Justice? )

## ABOUT KEVIN "IRISH" O'HALLORAN

Kevin 'Irish' O'Halloran was born in Dublin, Ireland in 1961 and migrated to Australia with his parents, elder brother and two sisters in 1970. He grew up around the inner suburbs of Melbourne and was educated at University High School, Parkville. He left school at the end of 1978 aged 17, and worked on numerous labouring jobs.

In April 1981, Irish joined the Australian Army. During his nearly 28 years of service he has served on four operational tours of duty, all in the Royal Australian Infantry Corps (RAInf).

He lives in Perth and is married to Michelle and they have two children Sean (8) and Siobhan (6). His hobbies and interests revolve mainly around his young family; however, he does hold a certificate as a Rugby Union Coach as well as a Rugby Union touchline judge. He regards his deployment to Rwanda as his most demanding and rewarding posting to date.

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