



# Curriculum Connections

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UPDATED EDITION

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# The Struggle to Prevent Genocide

## The Promise of Never Again

**ADL**®

## In This Issue

Addressing the United Nations on the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan remarked:

*“On occasions such as this, rhetoric comes easily. We rightly say ‘never again.’ But action is much harder. Since the Holocaust the world has, to its shame, failed more than once to prevent or halt genocide.”*

Following World War II, the international community cried “never again” in response to the Holocaust, and the United Nations adopted the Genocide Convention as a pledge to ensure that such horrors would never be repeated. Since that time, however, the world community has failed to prevent the occurrence of genocide in places like Cambodia, Northern Iraq, Bosnia and Rwanda, prompting Paul Rusesabagina—a survivor of the Rwandan genocide and subject of the film, *Hotel Rwanda*—to assert, “The most abused words are ‘never again.’ When they were saying that in 1994, it was happening again and again and again and again. So ‘never again’ to me is not enough.”

A decade after Rwanda, the international community failed to intervene decisively in Darfur to prevent another genocide from occurring. More than sixty years after the Holocaust, many question whether the world is doing enough to stop the violence.

Yom HaShoah, or Holocaust Remembrance Day, presents the Jewish community and its allies an opportunity each spring to both honor the six million Jews who perished during the Holocaust and to reflect on what can be done to prevent another genocide from occurring.

In the spirit of Yom HaShoah, this issue of *Curriculum Connections* designed for high school students explores what the world has done to achieve the ideal of “never again” and why these efforts have fallen short of averting atrocities in places such as Rwanda and the Sudan.

The first two lessons in this unit introduce the concept of “never again” as a response to the Holocaust and highlight the one-man crusade by Raphael Lemkin—a Polish, Jewish lawyer and Holocaust survivor—to establish an international convention that would prevent and punish the crime of genocide. The second half of the unit examines the barriers that have thwarted the realization of “never again” since World War II, with a special emphasis on the crisis in Darfur.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, “Man’s inhumanity to man is not only perpetrated by the vitriolic actions of those who are bad. It is also perpetrated by the vitiating inaction of those who are good.” This issue of *Curriculum Connections* seeks to deepen students’ understanding of the factors that have contributed to global unresponsiveness in the face of genocide, and to inspire them to take action in response to hatred of all kinds in the world.

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# Correlation of Lessons to Common Core Standards

Content Area/Standard	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4
<b>Reading</b>				
R.1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.	X	X	X	X
R.2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.		X		
R.3: Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.	X	X		X
R.4: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.		X		
R.6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.				X
R.7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.	X		X	
R.9: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.		X		X
<b>Writing</b>				
W.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.			X	X
W.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.		X		X
W.6: Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.		X		X
W.7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.		X	X	
W.8: Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.			X	X

W.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.				X
Speaking and Listening				
SL.1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.	X	X	X	X
SL.2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.	X			
SL.3: Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.		X		X
SL.4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.			X	X
SL.5: Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.		X		X
Language				
L.3: Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.	X	X		
L.5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.	X	X		X
L.6: Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.	X	X	X	X

## Lesson 1

# The Ideal of “Never Again”

### Rationale

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce students to the concept of “never again” and the international commitment to prevent genocide following World War II. Students listen to and discuss a contemporary song by a Jewish hip-hop artist in order to explore the ideal of “never again” as a response to the Holocaust and the meaning that this ideal holds for Jewish people and the broader world community. Students brainstorm steps that have been taken since World War II as well as things that they can do today to prevent another genocide. The lesson concludes by asking students to reflect on whether or not the ideal of “never again” has been achieved, and if they think that mass slaughter or the extermination of a group of people has occurred since the Holocaust.

### Objectives

- Students will explore the concept of “never again” as a response to the Holocaust.
- Students will use contemporary music as a vehicle for learning about the Holocaust and steps taken by the international community to prevent genocide since World War II.
- Students will reflect on actions that they can take as individuals to prevent future genocides.

### Age Range

Grades 10–12

### Time

45 minutes or 1 class period

### Requirements

Handouts and Resources:

- [Overview of the Holocaust: 1933–1945](#) (for teacher only)
- [“Never Again” Lyrics](#) (one for each student or post for class viewing)
- [Remedy: Giving “Never Again” a Hip-Hop Vibe](#) (one for each student)

Other Material:

- [“Never Again” audio/video](#) (optional)
- Internet access and speakers (optional)
- Chart paper, markers

### Advanced Preparation

- Reproduce handouts as directed above.
- Prior to conducting this lesson, read the [Overview of the Holocaust: 1933–1945](#) in preparation of class discussions and to answer any questions students may have.

### Techniques and Skills

analyzing music, brainstorming, connecting past to present, historical understanding, large and small group discussion, reading skill

### Key Words

Annihilation  
Antisemitism  
Auschwitz  
Bear witness  
Ghetto  
Heritage  
Holocaust  
Identity  
Liquidation  
Mass extermination  
Nazi  
Oppressed

## Procedures

### Part I (25 minutes)

1. Post or distribute the [lyrics](#) to the song, “Never Again,” by Jewish hip-hop artist, Remedy. If possible, [play the song](#) for students. Discuss some of the following questions:
  - What historical event is the subject of this song?
  - What is the Holocaust?
  - What happened to Jewish people in Europe during the Holocaust?
  - What other groups of people were impacted by the Holocaust?

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**NOTE:** The Holocaust is defined as the murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators. Sinti-Roma, Poles, people with physical and mental disabilities, homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war and political dissidents were also targeted by the Nazis.

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2. Make sure to answer students’ questions about the song and clarify references that may be unfamiliar to them, including the following lines:
  - 6 million died for what?
  - Moving targets who walk with the star in their sleeve/Forever marked with a number, tattooed to your body
  - I can’t express the pain/That was felt on the train/To Auschwitz
  - Mass extermination/Total annihilation/Shipped into the ghetto and prepared for liquidation
  - Flashbacks of family then sent to the showers
3. Ask students to think about the song’s title and the refrain (“Never again shall we march like sheep to the slaughter...”) and pose the following questions:
  - Why do you think Remedy titled the song “Never Again”?
  - Have you ever heard this term used in reference to the Holocaust?
  - What do you think it signifies for Jewish people? All people?
  - How did it happen that 6 million Jews perished in the Holocaust before the world intervened to stop it?
4. Make sure students understand that following the Holocaust the Jewish people and much of the world community vowed to take action so that such atrocities might *never again* be waged against any group of people.

### Part II (20 minutes)

1. Distribute the handout, [Remedy: Giving “Never Again” a Hip-Hop Vibe](#), which provides biographical information about the artist and discusses the way in which he has expressed his Jewish identity through his music. Divide students into pairs or small groups. Instruct students to spend about 10 minutes reading the handout and discussing ways in which Remedy has used his music to further the ideal of *never again*.
2. Reconvene the whole class and allow students to share some of their thoughts regarding the reading. Ask students for examples of actions that other people (or groups, governments, etc.) have taken since World War II to ensure that another Holocaust never takes place. List their responses on a sheet of chart paper. (Examples might include education, commemoration, documentation, legislation, lobbying, protests, tribunals, military intervention, economic sanctions, monitoring, mediation, peacekeeping, media awareness, etc.)
3. Ask students if there are things that they can personally do to make *never again* a reality, and record these responses as well. (Examples might include reading/educating oneself, educating others, speaking out against small and large acts of prejudice and hatred, getting involved in community/political activism, writing letters to politicians and other authorities, etc.)

4. Conclude the lesson by telling students that throughout this unit they will be learning about some important ways that the world has said never again to another Holocaust as well as some of the events that have frustrated the realization of this ideal. For the next class, ask students whether they believe that the ideal of *never again* has been achieved, and if they think that mass slaughter or the extermination of a group of people has occurred since the Holocaust. (Don't discuss this question yet, just ask students to reflect on it).

# “Never Again” Lyrics

A rap song performed by Remedy (  [Listen](#) )

*[man praying in Hebrew during intro]*

*[Intro]*

Feel this,  
To all those races, colors, and creeds, every man bleeds for the  
countless victims and all their families of  
the murdered, tortured and slaved, raped, robbed and persecuted  
Never Again, To the men, women, and children.  
Who died in their struggle to survive, never to be forgotten.  
Reuven Ben Menachum yo.

*[Verse 1]*

Yo my own blood, dragged through the mud  
Perished in my heart still cherished and loved  
Stripped of our pride, everything we lived for  
Families cried, there's no where to run to, no where to hide  
Tossed to the side, Access denied  
6 million died for what? Yo a man shot dead in his back  
Helpless women and children under constant attack  
For no reason, till the next season, and we still bleeding  
Yo it's freezing, And men burn in hell, some for squeezing  
No hope for a remedy, nothing to believe  
Moving targets who walk with the star in their sleeve  
Forever marked wit a number, tattooed to your body  
Late night, eyes closed, clutched to my shotty  
Having visions, flashes of death camps and prisons, no provisions  
Deceived by the devils decisions, forced into a slave  
Death before dishonour for those men who were brave  
Shot and sent to their grave, can't awaken, it's too late  
Everything's been taken, I'm shaken, family, history, the making

*[Chorus: Remedy w/ Israel's anthem]*

Never again shall we march like sheep to the slaughter  
Never again shall we sit and take orders  
Stripped of our culture, robbed of our name  
Raped of our freedom and thrown into the flames  
Forced from our families, taken from our homes  
Moved from our God then burned of our bones  
Never again, never again, shall we march like sheep to the slaughter  
Never again, leave our sons and daughters, stripped of our culture  
Robbed of our name  
Raped of our freedom and thrown into the flames  
Forced from our families, taken from our homes  
Moved from our God and everything we own

*[Verse 2]*

Some fled through the rumors of wars  
But most left were dead, few escaped to the shores  
With just one loaf of bread, banished, hold in for questioning

And vanished, Never to be seen again, I can't express the pain  
That was felt in the train to Auschwitz, tears poured down like rain  
Naked face to face, with the master race, Hatred blood and David  
My heart belongs to God and stay sacred  
Rabbi's and priests, Disabled individuals  
The poor, the scholars all labeled common criminals  
Mass extermination, total annihilation  
Shipped into the ghetto and prepared for liquidation  
Tortured and starved, innocent experiments  
Stripped down and carved up or gassed to death  
The last hour, I smelled the flowers  
Flashbacks of family then sent to the showers  
Powerless undressed, women with babies clumped tight to their chest  
Crying, who would've guessed—dying, another life lost  
Count the cost, another body gas burned and tossed in the holocaust

*[Chorus]*

*[Outro]*

Never Again, Never Again  
The final solution is now retribution  
Remedy, Wu-Tang.

*[man praying in Hebrew]*

Shema yisrael ad-onhai elo-hainu ad-onai echod  
["Hear Oh Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One"]

*[GUNSHOT]*

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Music and lyrics © Remedy and used with permission from *The Swarm* Vol. 1 (Wu-Tang Killa Bees, 1998).

## Remedy: Giving “Never Again” a Hip-Hop Vibe

Born Ross Filler in Staten Island, New York, Remedy grew up in a Conservative Jewish family where “we observed, but we didn’t get too crazy.”<sup>1</sup> He has fond memories of Passover at his Aunt Hannah’s, where he “used to love looking for the matzah”<sup>2</sup> and often tried to slip away from the table in order to avoid reading from the *Haggadah* (a text read during the Passover *seder* or dinner recounting the biblical story of the Exodus).

Despite the anti-Semitism that he experienced growing up, Remedy learned to embrace his Jewish identity. “When I was young and going to school,” Remedy recalls, “knowing I was a Jew-I always felt a little bit leery. Kids would call me Jew, kike, penny-pincher. Now, I’m proud of being a Jew. To be a Jew is good.”<sup>3</sup>

As an artist, Remedy has made a conscious choice to learn more about his Jewish heritage and to celebrate his identity through music. Through reading about Jewish history, Remedy became fascinated with the Holocaust. “I read and I read,” Remedy once commented. “I watched every movie I could find about it. I couldn’t believe this actually went on and that it happened only a little more than 50 years ago. I couldn’t understand why it happened.”<sup>4</sup>

Remedy learned from his 95-year-old grandmother that members of his own family had perished in the Holocaust. “I was just buggin’ you know?,” Remedy remarked upon his discovery. “I found out my great-uncle was shot in the back and a lot of my family was taken to camps, never to be seen again...Others I know went through the camps still got their wrists numbered. Some of my family made it out, over here to the States, and ran around, slaving, just trying to put food in their mouths.”<sup>5</sup>

Remedy’s discovery of the horrors his family faced led him to write the song, “Never Again,” both as a means to express his personal feelings and a way to ensure that future generations remember the Holocaust long after its survivors are able to bear witness.

“It’s drastic. My blood went through this. I’m gonna let people know, that’s part of me right there...The sad thing is that, soon, everyone who survived won’t be around anymore. There’ll only be people like me carrying on the message. See, they didn’t have Holocaust education when I went to high school. And from the looks of things, what they have now isn’t working. You need a guy like me to reach the kids. Kids learn faster through music than by you sitting there and talking to ‘em.”<sup>6</sup>

“Never Again” begins with the sounds of Jewish men praying—taken from the score of the film, *Schindler’s List*—and includes samples of the Israeli national anthem, Hatikvah. The refrain includes the powerful lyrics, “Never again shall we march like sheep to the slaughter / Never again shall we sit and take orders / Stripped of our culture / Robbed of our name / Raped of our freedom and thrown into the flames / Forced from our families, taken from our homes / Moved from our God then burned of our bones.” “I cried with every line I wrote,”<sup>7</sup> Remedy recalls.

“Never Again” was first released on the Wu-Tang Clan CD, *The Swarm* in 1998. The members of the Wu embraced Remedy’s Jewish identity. “Hip-hop is the voice of the oppressed,” observes Cappadonna, a member of the group. “The Jews suffered, they’ve been through it like the blacks.”<sup>8</sup>

For Remedy, “Never Again” captures the essence of what being a Jewish rapper is about. “If you’re not expressing yourself and your Judaism and your love for your people through your music,” he says, “then you’re really not representing who you are...I also don’t support Jewish rap that mocks Judaism and being Jewish. It’s nothing to joke about or laugh at. I don’t support mocking our own people. I love my people.”<sup>9</sup>

Remedy has performed “Never Again” throughout the world—including Israel and Germany and across the United States for Holocaust survivors and students in Jewish schools. He regularly tours college campuses, where he works with Hillel and pro-Israel groups to combat anti-Israel and anti-Semitic sentiment. “I’m here to spread the word-humanity,” he tells audiences. “I happen to be Jewish, but I represent humanity.”<sup>10</sup>

Remedy also decided to release his last album in Israel rather than the U.S. “The album will still be available here,” he says. “But I wanted it to be an Israeli hip-hop album to show that there’s such a thing as Jewish hip-hop that’s loud and proud.”<sup>11</sup>

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ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Aleza Goldsmith, “Jewish Rapper Takes Chai Road Here ‘to Spread Word,’” *Jewish Bulletin of Northern California*, December 1, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> “Remedy ‘Jew-Tang Clan,’” *Tattoo Jew Magazine*, [http://members.tripod.com/irish\\_mac/artical2.html](http://members.tripod.com/irish_mac/artical2.html)

<sup>4</sup> Liel Leibovitz, “The Wu Jew,” *The Jewish Week*, December 10, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> See note 3 above.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> See note 4 above.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> See note 1 above.

<sup>11</sup> See note 4 above.

## Lesson 2

# The Totally Unofficial Man: A Holocaust Survivor's Campaign to End Genocide

### Rationale

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce students to the history of the term genocide and the process by which it was established in international law. Students learn that genocide as a word and concept did not exist prior to World War II. Students use primary documents and text to learn about Raphael Lemkin—a Polish, Jewish lawyer and Holocaust survivor—who dedicated his life to institutionalizing the prevention and punishment of genocide in international law, and to challenging the inviolability of state sovereignty. Students reflect on quotes about state sovereignty, and explore how the notion of sovereignty has served as an obstacle to the institutionalization, prevention and punishment of genocide. Students create a timeline that captures critical events and ideas from the story of Lemkin and his work on the Genocide Convention.

### Objectives

- Students will define and explore the concepts of genocide and state sovereignty.
- Students will learn about a Holocaust survivor, Raphael Lemkin, and his role in the prevention and punishment of genocide.
- Students will learn about the history and passage of the Genocide Convention.
- Students will analyze primary documents to learn about codification of laws against genocide in the United States and internationally.

### Age Range

Grades 10–12

### Time

Approximately 2 hours or 3 class periods (Parts I and II can be taught together in 45 minutes; Part III can be omitted if no more than one class period is available)

### Requirements

Handouts and Resources:

- [Examples of Mass Murder and Acts of Barbarism Prior to World War II](#)
- [Quotes About Sovereignty](#)
- [The Totally Unofficial Man: Raphael Lemkin and the Struggle for a Genocide Convention](#) (one for each student)
- [The Totally Unofficial Man: Questions for Discussion or Homework](#) (one for each student)

Other Material:

- Board/Smart board, chart paper, markers, tape, construction paper, assorted art supplies (for students to create timeline in Part III of lesson)

### Advanced Preparation

- Reproduce handouts as directed above.
- Post [Examples of Mass Murder and Acts of Barbarism Prior to World War II](#) for students to view and reference (see Part I #2).

### Key Words

Annihilate  
Allied powers  
Atrocity  
Axis powers  
Autonomous  
Barbarism  
Codification  
Convention  
Crimes against humanity  
Deportation  
Extermination  
Genocide  
Hitler  
Holocaust  
Indifference  
Infringe  
Intent  
Institutionalize  
Intervention  
Isolationist  
Inviolability  
Jurisdiction  
Nazi  
Nuremberg Trials  
Oppression  
Passivity  
Perpetrators  
Pogrom  
Propaganda  
Ratify  
Resolution  
Sovereignty  
Systematic  
United Nations

- Write the following quote on the board/smart board or a sheet of chart paper: “We are in the presence of a crime that has no name.”
- Write on separate pieces of chart paper at least four of the [Quotes about Sovereignty](#) for use in Part II of the lesson. Choose at least two from the “In Support of Sovereignty” section and at least two from the “Critique of Sovereignty” section.
- Determine if you will have students read [The Totally Unofficial Man: Raphael Lemkin and the Struggle for a Genocide Convention](#) independently in class or as a homework work assignment the night before this activity is conducted (see Part II #4).
- Prepare a timeline out of construction or chart paper. Title it “Raphael Lemkin and the Struggle for a Genocide Convention” and divide it into six sections, which the students will fill in later. Set aside for Part III #1.

## Techniques and Skills

analyzing primary documents, brainstorming, connecting past to present, cooperative group work, creating a timeline, critical thinking, historical understanding, large and small group discussion, reading skills, research skills

## Procedures

### Part I (20 minutes)

1. Post the following quote on the board or a sheet of chart paper: “We are in the presence of a crime that has no name.”  
Ask students if they know who stated these words and what they refer to. After some discussion, inform students that Great Britain’s Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, spoke these words in 1942 as the public grew more aware of the Nazi’s systematic extermination of millions of Jews, Gypsies, Jehovah’s Witnesses, homosexuals and many others.
2. Ask students to consider why Churchill described Nazi atrocities as “a crime that has no name.” Suggest to them that there had been many examples of mass murder and acts of barbarism prior to World War II ([click here for examples](#) that can be posted as an illustration). Ask students what made the Nazis’ murderous campaign different from these examples, and beyond description using the conventional language of the time. Highlight the following ideas, which characterize the Nazi Holocaust and set it apart from most other mass murders that preceded it:
  - The Nazis’ motive for their crimes arose solely from racial and religious hatred.
  - These crimes were waged on a scale that had never existed before.
  - These were not crimes against the rules of war, but crimes against humanity as a whole.
  - There was a deliberate intention and systematic plan of action to completely exterminate a particular group of people.
  - Those who designed and implemented the plan were “cool-minded theorists first and barbarians only second.”
3. Ask students what term is commonly used today to describe Hitler’s attempt to exterminate the Jewish people (genocide). Offer the following definition: **Genocide** as defined by the United Nations is any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, including
  - killing members of the group;
  - causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
  - deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
  - imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
  - forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.
4. Ask students if Hitler and the Nazis were guilty of the crime of genocide during the time they carried out their murderous campaign. Tell students that they may be surprised to learn that the term genocide did not even exist prior to World War II and there were consequently no international laws banning it (though the Hague and Geneva Conventions did prohibit “war crimes” and “crimes against humanity”).

## Part II (25 minutes)

1. Write the word *sovereignty* on the board and ask students to define the term, especially as it relates to states or nations. If students are not familiar with the term, offer the following definition: **sovereignty** is the exclusive right of a government or ruler to exercise supreme authority over a nation; complete independence and self-government with freedom from external control.
2. Post at least four of the [Quotes about Sovereignty](#), each in a different area of the classroom. Make sure to use at least two from the “In Support of Sovereignty” section and at least two from the “Critique of Sovereignty” section. Ask students to silently read all of the quotes and to stand next to the one that resonates most for them. When students are positioned by quotes, ask for volunteers to share what the quote means to them and why they chose to stand by a particular statement.
3. Explain to students that the idea of state sovereignty has been so firmly entrenched as a principle of world politics for so long that most countries resist intervening in the affairs of other autonomous states, even when atrocities are being committed. Tell students that:
  - The reticence of nations to infringe upon state sovereignty has contributed to policies of nonintervention during genocides or mass murders in Turkey (the Armenian Genocide), Cambodia, Northern Iraq, Bosnia, Rwanda, and the Sudan, to name just a few examples.
  - Even after the Holocaust, Nazi war criminals were convicted only for those crimes committed after Hitler invaded other countries, implying that the violation of state sovereignty was the basis for all charges rather than the crime of mass murder wherever it took place. (Another way to illustrate this point is to suggest that had Hitler exterminated only the Jews of Germany and never invaded another country, the world may not have considered it a crime under international law).
4. Tell students that they will be learning about a Polish, Jewish lawyer and Holocaust survivor who dedicated his life to challenging the inviolability of state sovereignty and to institutionalizing the prevention and punishment of genocide in international law. Distribute the reading, [The Totally Unofficial Man: Raphael Lemkin and the Struggle for a Genocide Convention](#), which can be read independently in class or assigned as homework. [Questions for Discussion or Homework](#) have been included to extend this reading.

## Part III (60–90 minutes)

1. Post in the front of the room the construction or chart paper, prepared in advance, titled “Raphael Lemkin and the Struggle for a Genocide Convention.”
2. Divide the class into six groups. Tell them that they will be revisiting one section of the reading about Raphael Lemkin in depth. Assign each group the corresponding section indicated below:

Group 1: Introduction and “The Emergence of a Vision”

Group 2: “A Law against ‘Barbarity’ and ‘Vandalism’” and “World War II Begins”

Group 3: “Lemkin Flees to Safety” and “The Crime That Has No Name”

Group 4: “The Aftermath of World War II” and “A New United Nations Provides Hope”

Group 5: “Toward Ratification” and “The Cold War Weakens Support”

Group 6: “Renewed Efforts” and “Lemkin’s Aspiration Finally Fulfilled”

Instruct each group to reread the assigned section and to highlight what they consider to be the two or three most important events or ideas during that part of Lemkin’s life. Tell students that they will be creating a visual representation of at least one of those important events or ideas for the timeline hanging in the front of the class. Encourage students to be creative and to work collaboratively. (Examples of visual representations include maps, copies of primary documents, symbolic artifacts, illustrations, historical photos, imagined letters or journal entries in the voice of historical figures, etc.)

3. Ask each group to prepare a brief (2–3 minute) oral presentation summarizing the significance of the visual representation they have created. Allow time for each group to display their work, discuss it, and answer questions.
4. Conclude the activity by asking students to silently reflect for a moment on the life of Raphael Lemkin and the history of the genocide convention. If students have participated in [Lesson 1](#), ask them to comment on how Lemkin and the Genocide Convention have helped to achieve the ideal of “never again.” If students have not participated in Lesson 1, ask for volunteers to share a single word or phrase that sums up their feelings about what they have learned.

### Extension Activity

The following primary documents are referenced within the reading on Raphael Lemkin and the Struggle for a Genocide Convention:

- [United Nations General Assembly Resolution 96\(I\)](#)
- [United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide](#)
- [U.S. Genocide Convention Implementation Act of 1987](#)

Assign students one or more of these documents to analyze either in class or as a homework assignment. Ask students to answer one or more of the [Document Based Questions \(DBQ\) on the Genocide Resolution and Conventions](#). Encourage students to do further research on these documents in order to provide a context for their analysis. Ask several students to share their responses in class and allow time for the students to discuss and debate these responses.

# Examples of Mass Murder and Acts of Barbarism Prior to World War II

- In the 1st century, Julius Caesar's campaign in Gaul took more than a million lives, and a million more were enslaved.
- The Albigensian Crusade of 1209 waged against the Cathars and spanning 40 years, led to the extermination of populations, cities and crops in Southern France. (In one town, fifteen thousand men, women, and children were slaughtered wholesale—many of them in the sanctuary of the church).
- The slave trade, beginning in the 16th century, was responsible for the murder of about 17 million African blacks.
- The conquest of the Americas from the 16th through the 19th centuries led to the murder of tens of millions of Native Americans.
- Zwede, under the rule of Shaka Zulu, annihilated the Ndwandwe people of South Africa in 1826.
- During the Taiping Rebellion in China (1851–64), approximately 30 million people were killed.
- Under the rule of King Leopold II of Belgium, the exploitation of indigenous people in the Congo, in part for the production of rubber, caused the population to halve between 1880 and 1920; over 10 million were the victims of murder, starvation, exhaustion and disease.
- From 1914–1923, the Young Turks slaughtered 600,000-1.5 million Armenians and 300,000–600,000 Pontian Greeks in the Ottoman Empire, and several hundred thousand others were exiled.
- The Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin, was responsible for the deaths of as many as 40 million people within the borders of the Soviet Union during the 1930s and 1940s.

# Quotes about Sovereignty

## In Support of Sovereignty

“Just what is it that America stands for? If she stands for one thing more than another it is for the sovereignty of self-governing people.” —Woodrow Wilson, 28th president of U.S. (1856–1924)

“All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.” —Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter

“Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state.” —Article 2(7) of the United Nations Charter

## Critique of Sovereignty

“In the absence of justice, what is sovereignty but organized robbery?” —Saint Augustine (354–430 C.E.)

“The sovereignty system is no longer consonant with either peace or justice.” —John Foster Dulles, Commission to Study the Bases of a Just and Durable Peace (est. 1943)

“Sovereignty must not be used for inflicting harm on anyone, whether citizen or foreigner.” —From *Omnipotent Government* by economist and social philosopher Ludwig von Mises, 1944

“In the next century, nations as we know it will be obsolete; all states will recognize a single, global authority...Perhaps national sovereignty wasn’t such a great idea after all... But it has taken the events in our own wondrous and terrible century to clinch the case for world government.” —Strobe Talbot (Deputy Secretary of State under Clinton), quoted in *Time*, July 20, 1992

“It is undeniable that the centuries-old doctrine of absolute and exclusive sovereignty no longer stands...Underlying the rights of the individual and the rights of peoples is a dimension of universal sovereignty that resides in all humanity.” —Former U.N. Secretary General Boutros-Boutros Ghali, in *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1992–93

“There are a lot of very brilliant people who believe that the nation-state is fast becoming a relic of the past.” —President Bill Clinton, quoted in *The New York Times*, November 25, 1997

# The Totally Unofficial Man Raphael Lemkin and the Struggle for a Genocide Convention

In 1957 *The New York Times* described the Polish-born Jewish lawyer, Raphael Lemkin, as “that exceedingly patient and totally unofficial man.” They were referring to Lemkin’s single-minded and virtually single-handed struggle to establish a **convention** in international law that would prevent and punish the crime of **genocide**. By the time *The New York Times* description had been written, Lemkin had already labored tirelessly for almost a quarter-century toward the realization of this goal. During the intervening years, Hitler and the Nazis waged a crusade of unprecedented hatred and systematic violence that led to the slaughter of approximately six million Jews and five million others.

When the Holocaust began, the word genocide did not even exist and there were no treaties among the world’s nations to compel action against such atrocities. Raphael Lemkin recognized the need for such an international law and pact long before his contemporaries, and launched an official campaign just about the time Hitler rose to power in the early 1930s. Lemkin’s foresight, however, predates the Nazi era and began to come into focus even during his childhood years.

## The Emergence of a Vision

From an early age, Raphael Lemkin experienced hatred and wanton violence firsthand. In 1906, when he was just a boy of 6 years, 70 Jewish people were murdered and 90 gravely injured in a **pogrom** that took place in the Bialystok region of Poland where Lemkin lived. Following the massacre, an angry mob tore open the victims’ stomachs and stuffed them with feathers.

During World War I, Lemkin—then a teenager—fled with his family from the advancing German army into the forest, where one of his brothers died of pneumonia and malnourishment. Their farmhouse was destroyed by artillery fire and the soldiers made off with their crops, cattle, and horses.

At about the same time, hundreds of miles from Poland, the Young Turk government—stating that there was no room for Christians in Turkey—had set in motion the brutal starvation and murder of nearly a million Armenians. Mehmed Talaat, the Turkish interior minister at that time, was one of the engineers of the savage campaign.

Soghomon Tehlirian was a survivor of what is known today as the **Armenian genocide**, but his relatives were not as fortunate. At the age of 19, Soghomon and his family were marched out of their town with other Armenians. During this death march, his sisters were raped, his brother’s head was split open with an ax, and his mother was shot. Soghomon woke one day from a blow to his head that left him unconscious to find himself in a field of corpses and to learn that he was his family’s only survivor.

After the war, Soghomon had difficulty sleeping and experienced frequent epileptic seizures. Overcome by grief and anger, he joined an Armenian group secretly plotting to assassinate Turkish leaders responsible for the slaughter. In March of 1921, twenty-four year old Soghomon traveled to Berlin, where Mehmed Talaat—the former Turkish interior minister—was living peacefully as a private citizen in Germany. Though a Turkish court had found Talaat and other leaders responsible for mass murder and sentenced them to death, the German government refused to transfer Talaat back to Turkey. On March 14, Soghomon Tehlirian approached Talaat on a Berlin street and shot him in the back of the head, shouting, “This is to avenge the death of my family!” Soghomon was later acquitted of the crime by reason of what would be called today “temporary insanity.”

Raphael Lemkin was a student in Poland at the time of the assassination. He was troubled by the turn of events and questioned his professors about why Talaat was not arrested for his crimes. Lemkin was disturbed by the answer: There was no law in existence under which he could be arrested. The inviolability of state **sovereignty** at that time—the exclusive right of a government or ruler to exercise supreme authority over a nation—kept the Germans from interfering in the affairs of an autonomous state. “It is a crime for Tehlirian to kill a man,” Lemkin challenged, “but it is not a crime for his oppressor to kill more than a million men?”

## A Law against “Barbarity” and “Vandalism”

Lemkin was chilled by what he had learned of the Armenian slaughter and the failure of the world community to act both during and after the massacre. He believed that if such an atrocity could happen once, it could happen again unless far-reaching changes were made in international law and practice.

In 1933, Lemkin, then a lawyer, made plans to speak at an international criminal law conference in Madrid about the Armenian slaughter and Hitler’s rise to power. He drafted a new law that would prohibit the destruction of nations, races and religious groups, and punish the perpetrators wherever they were caught regardless of their nationality or where the crimes were committed. The proposed law sought to safeguard against “barbarity”—the physical destruction of a group—and “vandalism”—the destruction of a group’s culture.

Lemkin found few supporters for his ideas despite growing Nazi oppression and the flight of Jewish people from Germany by the thousands. Most European countries between the world wars were struggling economically, looking inward toward their own growth and stability, and unwilling to rethink the sacred notion of state sovereignty. Many were skeptical of Lemkin’s predictions about Hitler. In Poland, Lemkin was reprimanded by the Foreign Minister for “insulting our German friends” and was fired by the Warsaw government as deputy public prosecutor for refusing to limit his criticisms of Hitler. Lemkin was blocked from presenting his new law at the Madrid conference, but refused to give up and went on to speak at law conferences throughout Europe during the 1930s.

## World War II Begins

In 1939, one week before invading Poland, Hitler is said to have commented to his military chiefs: “It was knowingly and lightheartedly that Genghis Khan sent thousands of women and children to their deaths. History sees in him only the founder of a state.... The aim of war is not to reach definite lines but to annihilate the enemy physically. It is by this means that we shall obtain the living space we need. Who today still speaks of the massacre of the Armenians?”

The invasion of Poland marked the official start of World War II, but the Jews and other “undesirable” groups had already suffered for six long years under Nazi rule. Though many throughout Europe and America turned a blind eye to the coming horror, Raphael Lemkin understood the harsh reality. As the Nazi army entered Poland, Lemkin fled to the train station with only a shaving kit and summer coat.

When the train station was bombed, Lemkin was forced to retreat to the woods, where he witnessed further bombing attacks and the death of many from starvation, disease and exhaustion. Lemkin was fortunate to eventually find a Jewish family in Soviet-occupied Poland who agreed to shelter him. From there, he was able to catch a train to Eastern Poland, where his brother and parents lived. He begged them to flee with him, but they refused to believe their lives were at risk. “I read in the eyes of all of them one plea,” wrote Lemkin. “Do not talk of our leaving this warm home, our beds, our stores of food, the security of our customs...We will have to suffer, but we will survive somehow.”

## Lemkin Flees to Safety

Lemkin fled alone to Lithuania and then on to Sweden, where he lectured on international law. It was there that he started collecting the legal decrees recorded by the Nazis in each occupied country. Lemkin reasoned that if he could demonstrate the systematic abuse of the law as an instrument of hate and murder, he would generate support for his campaign against “barbarity” and “vandalism.”

In 1941, Lemkin was offered a position at Duke University in North Carolina thanks to a colleague there for whom he had done some translating. From Sweden, Lemkin traveled by rail through the Soviet Union, by ship to Japan and then on to Canada and finally Seattle. Another long train ride brought Lemkin across the U.S. to North Carolina, where he delivered a speech on the day of his arrival at a dinner with the President of Duke University. “If women, children and old people would be murdered a hundred miles from here, wouldn’t you run to help?,” Lemkin appealed to the American audience. “Then why do you stop this decision of your heart when the distance is 3,000 miles instead of a hundred?”

Lemkin wasted no time in arranging hundreds of similar presentations to women’s organizations, colleges, chambers of commerce, and other groups, trying to win support for his law. His assertion that Jewish people were being annihilated by the Nazis, however, was frequently met with disbelief or indifference.

When Hitler declared war on the United States in December of 1941, the U.S. War Department hired Lemkin as an international law expert, but they too were unmoved by his claims of a Jewish extermination. Undeterred, Lemkin reached out directly to President Roosevelt, but was told to put his proposal in a one-page memo. “[How do you] compress the pain of millions, the fear of nations, the hopes for salvation from death [into one page]?” Lemkin questioned. Several weeks later a courier delivered Roosevelt’s response, which said that he saw difficulty adopting such a law at the present time.

While the Allies persisted in their efforts to defeat the Nazis, they refused to declare as a war aim the rescue of the Jews, and rejected proposals to expand the number of Jewish refugee admissions. The widespread lack of concern that Lemkin encountered again and again led him to state that a “double murder” was taking place—one by Hitler and the other by the allied leaders, who knew full well what was taking place but refused to take action.

In May 1943, a Polish Jew named Szmul Zygielbojm took his own life to protest this lack of action. Zygielbojm was a member of the Polish National Council in London and, like Lemkin, traveled throughout Europe trying to raise awareness about the plight of the Jews. In his final letter, which he addressed to the Polish government in exile, he wrote: “By my death I wish to make the strongest possible protest against the passivity with which the world is looking on and permitting the extermination of the Jewish people. I know how little human life is worth today, but as I was unable to do anything during my life, perhaps by my death I shall help to break down the indifference of those who have the possibility now, at the last moment to save those Polish Jews still alive, from certain annihilation.”

Sadly, Zygielbojm’s suicide made little impact on public opinion. Most people—perhaps because they could not grasp the notion of an entire group being exterminated simply for existing—continued to respond with disbelief. After meeting with a Polish diplomat about the fate of the Jews, Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter responded, “I don’t believe you.” When the diplomat protested, Frankfurter explained, “I do not mean that you are lying. I simply said I cannot believe you.” Walter Laqueur, a historian who studied why the world community remained passive in the face of eye-witness accounts of the Holocaust, wrote, “While many...thought that the Jews were no longer alive, they did not necessarily believe that they were dead.”

## The Crime That Has No Name

Beset by public indifference and despair, Raphael Lemkin considered taking his own life as Szmul Zygielbojm had done, but he had invested too much in his cause to give up. Moved by the words of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill—“We are in the presence of a crime that has no name”—Lemkin decided that his campaign needed a name that would stir compassion and outrage. He sought a term to replace “barbarity” and “vandalism,” a word that would suggest not only mass extermination, but also other forms of systematic annihilation of people and cultures—deportation, the separation of men from women and children from parents, suppression of intellectual life, destruction of art, and so forth.

Lemkin was inspired by George Eastman, who named his new camera “Kodak” in 1888 because it was short, hard to mispronounce, and unlike other product names in the field. Lemkin similarly searched for a word that would be easy to remember and distinctive, and that would also arouse strong feelings of moral outrage. He eventually chose genocide, which is a combination of the Greek for race or tribe (*geno*) and the Latin for killing (*cide*). Lemkin defined his new term as “a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves.” He stressed that although murder is the worst expression of genocide, death is not the only indicator that genocide is taking place. Other signs include the destruction of political and social institutions, language, religion, economic security, health, and culture. “It takes centuries and sometimes thousands of years to create a natural culture,” Lemkin asserted, “but genocide can destroy a culture instantly, like fire can destroy a building in an hour.”

Lemkin’s new term and his campaign to establish an international law against genocide brought much criticism from around the world. Would a simple word make a difference? Could the existence of such a term stop a ruthless leader like Hitler? If genocide only exists where there is intent to annihilate a group, how could such intent be proven? Even some of the survivors of Nazi brutality preferred silence over the establishment of such a term, claiming that no word could ever capture the horrors they had experienced. Despite the skepticism, Lemkin put all of his hope in the new term, which quickly caught on throughout the world and was entered into Webster’s New International Dictionary in 1944.

During that same year, Lemkin published “Axis Rule in Occupied Europe,” a 712 page book on the laws instituted by Axis powers in 19 Nazi-occupied countries and territories in Europe. The book discussed his proposed international law and treaty to prevent and punish genocide, as well as ways to compensate survivors. It also argued that citizens who do nothing to stop genocide and those who offer aid to the perpetrators bear a certain degree of guilt: “The present destruction of Europe would

not be complete and thorough had the German people not accepted freely [the Nazi] plan, participated voluntarily in its execution and up to this point profited greatly therefrom.”

## The Aftermath of World War II

After World War II, the world was shocked as the **Nuremberg trials** revealed the full extent of Nazi atrocities. The indictment of all 24 defendants for “deliberate and systematic genocide” marked the first official use of the new term, but Lemkin was frustrated by the outcome of the trial. Though some 5,000 Nazis were charged with war crimes and many high-ranking Nazi officials were convicted and punished, the court prosecuted only those “crimes against humanity” committed after Hitler invaded other countries. In doing so, the court was treating the violation of state sovereignty as the basis for all charges rather than asserting that mass murder is a crime whenever and wherever it takes place. None of the defendants were officially convicted of genocide as Lemkin had defined it, leaving open the possibility that future tyrants could exterminate a group inside their own borders without consequence.

This possibility was made all the more horrifying as Lemkin discovered the fate of his own family during the Holocaust. After the war, he spent a great deal of time trying to track down his relatives. In Nuremberg, Lemkin met up with his brother, his brother’s wife and their two sons. There he learned that they were the sole survivors of the Lemkin family—at least 49 others had perished in the Warsaw ghetto, the concentration camps or on Nazi death marches. Though distraught, Lemkin grew more resolute in his efforts to prevent another genocide.

## A New United Nations Provides Hope

After Nuremberg, Lemkin dedicated himself to challenging the rigid notion of state sovereignty, and to institutionalizing the prevention and punishment of genocide in international law. He set his sights on the new United Nations, which had already identified piracy, forgery, and trade in women, slaves, and drugs as international crimes. “It seems inconsistent with our concepts of civilization,” Lemkin argued, “that selling a drug to an individual is a matter of worldly concern, while gassing millions of human beings might be a problem of internal concern. It seems also inconsistent with our philosophy of life that abduction of one woman for prostitution is an international crime, while sterilization of millions of women remains an internal affair of the state in question...Certainly human beings and their cultures are more important than a ship and its cargo. Surely Shakespeare is more precious than cotton.”

In New York, Lemkin aggressively lobbied the United Nations General Assembly, which had initiated discussion on the question of a genocide **resolution**. He emphasized the impact of genocide not only on its victims, but on all of humanity through diminishment of the world’s cultural inheritance. “Our whole heritage is a product of the contributions of all peoples. We can best understand this when we realize how impoverished our culture would be if the so-called inferior peoples doomed by Germany, such as the Jews, had not been permitted to create the *Bible*, or to give birth to an Einstein, a Spinoza; if the Poles had not had the opportunity to give to the world a Copernicus, a Chopin, a Curie; the Czechs, a Huss, a Dvorak; the Greeks, a Plato and a Socrates; the Russians, a Tolstoy and a Shostakovich.”

On December 11, 1946 the United Nations General Assembly unanimously passed **Resolution 96(I)**, which stated that “Genocide is a...denial of the right of existence [that] shocks the conscience of mankind, results in great losses to humanity in the form of cultural and other contributions represented by these human groups, and is contrary to moral law and to the spirit and aims of the United Nations.” In addition, the resolution affirmed that genocide is punishable under international law, encouraged United Nations Member States to enact legislation to prevent and punish this crime, and recommended that countries cooperate with one another to achieve these goals.

While resolutions are a formal expression of opinion or intent, they are not a source of actual law. So in August of 1948, Raphael Lemkin traveled to Geneva in order to press his case with the United Nations subcommittee responsible for drafting the genocide convention, which would act as a binding international agreement or law. Fifteen years after Raphael Lemkin had initiated his campaign for a law against “barbarity” and “vandalism,” the **Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide** was passed unanimously on December 9, 1948. It marked the first time the United Nations had adopted a human rights treaty.

When commentators sought out Lemkin for remarks on his achievement, he was nowhere to be found. Reporters finally located him that evening, alone and weeping in a dark assembly hall. He described the convention as an “epitaph on his mother’s grave” and a recognition that “she and many millions did not die in vain.” Emotionally and physically exhausted, Lemkin was admitted two days later to a Paris hospital, where he remained for three weeks.

## Toward Ratification

For the next two years, Raphael Lemkin spent most of his waking hours petitioning United Nations Member States so that he could secure the twenty endorsements needed to **ratify** the convention and make it official international law. The twentieth country signed on in October of 1950, a day Lemkin referred to as one “of triumph for mankind and the most beautiful day of my life.”

Despite passage of the convention into international law, there still remained a significant barrier. No law of this magnitude could be enforced without the support of the United States. Though the U.S. had been the first country to sign the convention in 1948 and President Truman strongly endorsed it, the measure did not get the two-thirds vote needed from the Senate to become U.S. law. Opponents of the law claimed that the language was too vague, that the definition of genocide was unclear and it would be problematic to prove intent. They said the law wasn’t specific enough about the nature of the violence or the number of victims required to warrant intervention. Some felt that the law went too far by trying to make “internal social changes,” and feared that it could be interpreted to force U.S. involvement where there weren’t serious enough violations to infringe on another country’s sovereignty. Still others argued that the standard for genocide was not rigorous enough, and that the U.S. could be targeted for its past treatment of Native Americans and African Americans (despite the fact that the convention did not allow for retroactive penalty).

The text of the genocide convention may not have been flawless, but this was no different than many other laws passed by the United States, which has a long history of debate and disagreement over the interpretation of its own constitution. In reality, opposition to the convention was driven by hostility toward any infringement on U.S. sovereignty, and by the isolationist and anti-foreign belief that the U.S. should be exempt from international law.

Lemkin himself was the target of intolerance and anti-Semitic attacks. H. Alexander Smith (R.-NJ) of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee noted that the “biggest propagandist” for the convention was “a man who comes from a foreign country who...speaks broken English.” He added that he was “sympathetic with the Jewish people, [but] they ought not to be the ones who are propagandizing [for the convention], and they are.” Despite the fact that Lemkin single-handedly conceived of the genocide convention and devoted his life to it for twenty years, he was not invited to testify in the congressional hearings on ratification.

## The Cold War Weakens Support

The invasion of South Korea by North Korea in 1950 caused a delay of the vote on the genocide convention. As the U.S. became embroiled in the Korean War, anti-foreign feelings and criticisms of the United Nations escalated, which further weakened support for the convention. Anti-Communist sentiment also led to accusations that the United Nations was a socialist institution bent on destabilizing the U.S. and advancing a Communist plot to rule the world.

When President Eisenhower took office in 1953, many thought he would be a strong supporter of the genocide convention. The former World War II General witnessed the devastation of the Nazi Holocaust firsthand. “We are told that the American soldier does not know what he is fighting for,” wrote Eisenhower to the Army Chief of Staff after liberating the Buchenwald concentration camp. “Now, at least, he will know what he is fighting against.” Eisenhower’s commitment to prevent another genocide, however, yielded to the growing anti-United Nations movement.

Despite the increasingly hostile climate, Lemkin persevered, beginning work on a four-volume history of genocide and forming the U.S. Committee for a United Nations Genocide Convention, which was made up of a broad selection of leaders from the women’s movement, labor unions, churches, Jewish organizations, and other community groups. The Senate Foreign Relations committee suppressed all potential hearings on the convention throughout the 1950s despite the fact that Lemkin was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 1950, 1951, 1952, 1958 and 1959.

On August 28, 1959, Raphael Lemkin died, alone and penniless, of a heart attack at the age of 59. Seven people attended his funeral. *The New York Times* wrote, “Diplomats of this and other nations who used to feel a certain concern when they saw a slightly stooped figure of Dr. Raphael Lemkin approaching them in the corridors of the United Nations need not be uneasy anymore. They will not have to think up explanations for a failure to ratify the genocide convention for which Dr. Lemkin worked so patiently and so unselfishly for a decade and a half...Death in action was his final argument—a final word to our own State Department, which has feared that an agreement not to kill would infringe upon our sovereignty.”

## Renewed Efforts

After Lemkin's death, the convention languished in the Senate until Senator William Proxmire (D-WI) took up the cause in 1967, by which time 70 nations had already ratified it. "The Senate's failure to act has become a national shame," Proxmire declared. "I serve notice today that from now on I intend to speak day after day in this body to remind the Senate of our failure to act and of the necessity for prompt action."

From 1967 to 1986, Proxmire made good on his promise, delivering 3,211 speeches on the genocide convention. During this period, the following instances of genocide or mass slaughter occurred throughout the world:

In 1968, Nigeria responded to Biafra's attempted secession by waging war against the Christian Ibo resistance and by cutting off food supplies to the civilian population, resulting in the murder and starvation of more than 1 million people.

Beginning in 1971, after Bengali nationalists made an appeal for autonomy, Pakistani troops killed 1–2 million Bengalis and raped about 200,000 girls and women.

In 1972, after a violent Hutu-led rebellion in Burundi, members of the ruling Tutsi minority hunted down and killed tens of thousands of Hutu, the rate of slaughter reaching a thousand per day. Between April and September, 100,000–150,000 Burundian Hutu were murdered.

From 1975 through 1978, approximately 2 million Cambodians (out of a population of eight million) were slaughtered, starved or worked to death in forced labor communes by the Khmer Rouge regime under Pol Pot.

As each of these massacres took place, the U.S. maintained a policy of silence and nonintervention, and in some cases provided support to or engaged in normalized relations with the genocidal regimes. Proxmire highlighted these atrocities within Congress and pressed for action, including passage of the genocide convention. "The true opponents to ratification...are not groups or individuals," asserted Proxmire in 1967. "They are the most lethal pair of foes for human rights everywhere in the world—ignorance and indifference."

## Lemkin's Aspiration Finally Fulfilled

Nineteen more years passed before an international controversy involving the embarrassment of a U.S. president finally prompted passage of the genocide convention in the United States. In 1985, President Ronald Reagan was scheduled to visit a cemetery in Bitburg, West Germany to lay a wreath and commemorate the 40th anniversary of the end of World War II. When the press reported that 49 Nazi soldiers were buried in the cemetery and that President Reagan had declined requests to visit Holocaust memorials during the trip, a firestorm of protest erupted. The President proceeded with his trip so as not to back down under public pressure, and on his return searched for ways to restore a favorable public image.

Ratification of the genocide convention was suggested by one of Reagan's advisors as a way to appease his critics, and within a year the genocide convention had cleared the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and come up for a full vote in the Senate, where it was ratified in 1986.

The Senate, however, attached a number of "RUD's" (reservations, understandings and declarations) to the convention that shielded the U.S. from potential charges of genocide in the future. These conditions state that the United States (1) will not undertake any treaty obligation that is inconsistent with the U.S. constitution or effects change in U.S. law or practice; (2) will leave implementation of the convention largely to the states; and (3) will not submit to the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice to decide disputes about the application or interpretation of the convention.

In essence, the RUD's allow the United States to dispense with any charges that conflict with national interest, thereby weakening the genocide law in the U.S. and making it more of a symbolic than a functional act. These stipulations have also garnered resentment from the international community. By 1989, nine European countries had filed formal objections to some of the RUD's in the U.S. ratification resolution, expressing concern with U.S. hostility toward international law.

Notwithstanding the limitations of the law, the U.S. Senate passed "implementing legislation" that finalized the ratification process for the **Genocide Convention Implementation Act**—also known as the Proxmire Act—in October 1988. The law makes genocide punishable by life imprisonment and fines of up to \$1 million. President Reagan marked the passage of the law with these words:

“We gather today to bear witness to the past and learn from its awful example to make sure we are not condemned to relive its crimes...During the Second World War, mankind witnessed the most heinous of crimes—the Holocaust. After the war, the nations of the world came together and drafted the genocide convention as a howl of anguish and an effort to prevent and punish future acts of genocide...We finally close the circle today by formally [joining] 97 nations of the world in condemning genocide and treating it as a crime...I am delighted to fulfill the promise made by Harry Truman to all the peoples of the world—and especially the Jewish people. I remember what the Holocaust meant to me as I watched the films of the death camps after the Nazi defeat in World War Two. Slavs, Gypsies, and others died in the fires as well. And we’ve seen other horrors this century—in the Ukraine, in Cambodia, in Ethiopia. They only renew our rage and righteous fury and make this moment all the more significant for me and all Americans. We pay tribute to those who suffered...with our action today.”

### Glossary

**Armenian Genocide:** From 1914–1923, the Young Turk government slaughtered 600,000–1.5 million Armenians and 300,000–600,000 Pontian Greeks in the Ottoman Empire, and several hundred thousand others were exiled.

**Convention:** A formal agreement between states for regulation of matters affecting all of them, especially an international agreement dealing with a specific subject, such as the treatment of prisoners of war.

**Genocide:** Defined by the United Nations, is any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, including: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

**Nuremberg Trials:** The war crimes trials of twenty-two major Nazi figures in Nuremberg, Germany, in 1945 and 1946 before the International Military Tribunal.

**Pogrom:** Originally a Russian word meaning “devastation” used to describe organized, large-scale acts of violence against Jewish communities, especially the kind instigated by the authorities in Czarist Russia.

**Ratify:** To formally approve or make an agreement official, valid or effective; to adopt or affirm a law or treaty.

**Resolution:** A formal statement of a decision or expression of opinion or intent voted by an official body or assembled group such as the U.S. Congress or United Nations.

**Sovereignty:** The exclusive right of a government or ruler to exercise supreme authority over a nation; complete independence and self-government with freedom from external control.

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# The Totally Unofficial Man: Questions for Discussion or Homework

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

## The Emergence of a Vision

1. What early experiences did Raphael Lemkin have that motivated him to work toward an international law against genocide?
2. How did the Armenian genocide specifically influence Lemkin?
3. Define the idea of state sovereignty in your own words.

## A Law against "Barbarity" and "Vandalism"

4. Why was Lemkin's idea for a law against "barbarity" and "vandalism" met with resistance and indifference in the 1930s?
5. How did the notion of state sovereignty act as an obstacle to Lemkin as he worked toward an international law against "barbarity" and "vandalism"?

## World War II Begins

6. What did Hitler mean when he said, "Who today still speaks of the massacre of the Armenians?" How did this statement relate to Lemkin's ideas and goals?
7. What is the significance of the following sentiment, which Lemkin's family expressed about fleeing the Nazis: "We will have to suffer, but we will survive somehow."

## Lemkin Flees to Safety

8. What did Lemkin mean when he asked an audience, "...Why do you stop this decision of your heart when the distance is 3,000 miles instead of a hundred?" Do you think that people's interest and sympathy in response to a crime is tied to nationality and geography?
9. Why do you think that the world responded with disbelief or indifference to mounting evidence about the extermination of Jewish people during World War II?
10. What did Lemkin mean when he said a "double murder" was taking place? Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

### The Crime That Has No Name

11. Why did British Prime Minister Winston Churchill describe the Nazi atrocities as “a crime that has no name?”
12. Why did Lemkin choose the term genocide to describe the “crime that has no name”? In your own words, describe how Lemkin defined this new term so that it meant something broader than mass murder.
13. What criticism did Lemkin receive regarding the new term, genocide? Do you agree or disagree with this criticism?
14. Lemkin wrote, “The present destruction of Europe would not be complete and thorough had the German people not accepted freely [the Nazi] plan, participated voluntarily in its execution and up to this point profited greatly therefrom.” Do you agree that bystanders during the Holocaust deserve blame for doing nothing to stop the crimes?

### The Aftermath of World War II

15. What role did the new idea of genocide play in the Nuremberg Trials following World War II?
16. Why was Lemkin disappointed with the outcome of the trial?

### A New United Nations Provides Hope

17. What arguments did Lemkin use to persuade the United Nations to pass a resolution against genocide?

### Toward Ratification

18. Why did the U.S. Senate reject the Genocide Convention in 1948? What were some of the objections raised?

### The Cold War Weakens Support

19. How did the Korean War and the emerging Cold War weaken support for the Genocide Convention in the U.S.?
20. Following Lemkin’s death, a NY Times reporter wrote, “Death in action was his final argument—a final word to our own State Department, which has feared that an agreement not to kill would infringe upon our sovereignty.” What did the journalist mean by this statement? How could an “agreement not to kill” interfere with U.S. sovereignty?

### Lemkin's Aspiration Finally Fulfilled

21. Describe in your own words the “RUD’s” that the U.S. attached to the Genocide Convention and what impact these reservations had on the law.

# United Nations General Assembly Resolution, 1946 96(I)

## The Crime of Genocide

December 11, 1946

Genocide is a denial of the right of existence of entire human groups, as homicide is the denial of the right to live of individual human beings; such denial of the right of existence shocks the conscience of mankind, results in great losses to humanity in the form of cultural and other contributions represented by these human groups, and is contrary to moral law and to the spirit and aims of the United Nations.

Many instances of such crimes of genocide have occurred when racial, religious, political, and other groups have been destroyed, entirely or in part.

The punishment of the crime of genocide is a matter of international concern.

The General Assembly, therefore,

Affirms that genocide is a crime under international law which the civilized world condemns, and for the commission of which principals and accomplices - whether private individuals, public officials or statesmen, and whether the crime is committed on religious, racial, political or any other grounds --are punishable;

Invites the Member States to enact the necessary legislation for the prevention and punishment of this crime;

Recommends that international co-operation be organized between States with a view to facilitating the speedy prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide, and, to this end,

Requests the Economic and Social Council to undertake the necessary studies, with a view to drawing up a draft convention on the crime of genocide to be submitted to the next regular session of the General Assembly.

Fifty-fifth plenary meeting,

11 December 1946

(RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY DURING THE SECOND PART OF ITS FIRST SESSION FROM 23 OCTOBER TO 15 DECEMBER 1946, Lake Success, New York, 1947.)

# Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide

*entry into force* 12 January 1951, in accordance with article XIII

## **The Contracting Parties,**

Having considered the declaration made by the General Assembly of the United Nations in its resolution 96 (I) dated 11 December 1946 that genocide is a crime under international law, contrary to the spirit and aims of the United Nations and condemned by the civilized world,

Recognizing that at all periods of history genocide has inflicted great losses on humanity, and

Being convinced that, in order to liberate mankind from such an odious scourge, international co-operation is required, Hereby agree as hereinafter provided:

### **Article 1**

The Contracting Parties confirm that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law which they undertake to prevent and to punish.

### **Article 2**

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

### **Article 3**

The following acts shall be punishable:

- (a) Genocide;
- (b) Conspiracy to commit genocide;
- (c) Direct and public incitement to commit genocide;
- (d) Attempt to commit genocide;
- (e) Complicity in genocide.

### **Article 4**

Persons committing genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III shall be punished, whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individuals.

### **Article 5**

The Contracting Parties undertake to enact, in accordance with their respective Constitutions, the necessary legislation to give effect to the provisions of the present Convention, and, in particular, to provide effective penalties for persons guilty of genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III.

**Article 6**

Persons charged with genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III shall be tried by a competent tribunal of the State in the territory of which the act was committed, or by such international penal tribunal as may have jurisdiction with respect to those Contracting Parties which shall have accepted its jurisdiction.

**Article 7**

Genocide and the other acts enumerated in article III shall not be considered as political crimes for the purpose of extradition. The Contracting Parties pledge themselves in such cases to grant extradition in accordance with their laws and treaties in force.

**Article 8**

Any Contracting Party may call upon the competent organs of the United Nations to take such action under the Charter of the United Nations as they consider appropriate for the prevention and suppression of acts of genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III.

**Article 9**

Disputes between the Contracting Parties relating to the interpretation, application or fulfillment of the present Convention, including those relating to the responsibility of a State for genocide or for any of the other acts enumerated in article III, shall be submitted to the International Court of Justice at the request of any of the parties to the dispute.

**Article 10**

The present Convention, of which the Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish texts are equally authentic, shall bear the date of 9 December 1948.

**Article 11**

The present Convention shall be open until 31 December 1949 for signature on behalf of any Member of the United Nations and of any nonmember State to which an invitation to sign has been addressed by the General Assembly. The present Convention shall be ratified, and the instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. After 1 January 1950, the present Convention may be acceded to on behalf of any Member of the United Nations and of any non-member State which has received an invitation as aforesaid. Instruments of accession shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

**Article 12**

Any Contracting Party may at any time, by notification addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, extend the application of the present Convention to all or any of the territories for the conduct of whose foreign relations that Contracting Party is responsible.

**Article 13**

On the day when the first twenty instruments of ratification or accession have been deposited, the Secretary-General shall draw up a process-verbal and transmit a copy thereof to each Member of the United Nations and to each of the non-member States contemplated in article 11. The present Convention shall come into force on the ninetieth day following the date of deposit of the twentieth instrument of ratification or accession. Any ratification or accession effected, subsequent to the latter date shall become effective on the ninetieth day following the deposit of the instrument of ratification or accession.

**Article 14**

The present Convention shall remain in effect for a period of ten years as from the date of its coming into force. It shall thereafter remain in force for successive periods of five years for such Contracting Parties as have not denounced it at least six months before the expiration of the current period. Denunciation shall be effected by a written notification addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

**Article 15**

If, as a result of denunciations, the number of Parties to the present Convention should become less than sixteen, the Convention shall cease to be in force as from the date on which the last of these denunciations shall become effective.

**Article 16**

A request for the revision of the present Convention may be made at any time by any Contracting Party by means of a notification in writing addressed to the Secretary-General. The General Assembly shall decide upon the steps, if any, to be taken in respect of such request.

**Article 17**

The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall notify all Members of the United Nations and the non-member States contemplated in article XI of the following:

- (a) Signatures, ratifications and accessions received in accordance with article 11;
- (b) Notifications received in accordance with article 12;
- (c) The date upon which the present Convention comes into force in accordance with article 13;
- (d) Denunciations received in accordance with article 14;
- (e) The abrogation of the Convention in accordance with article 15;
- (f) Notifications received in accordance with article 16.

**Article 18**

The original of the present Convention shall be deposited in the archives of the United Nations. A certified copy of the Convention shall be transmitted to each Member of the United Nations and to each of the non-member States contemplated in article XI.

**Article 19**

The present Convention shall be registered by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the date of its coming into force.

# U.S. Genocide Convention Implementation Act of 1987

**(a) Basic Offense** – Whoever, whether in time of peace or in time of war, in a circumstance described in subsection (d) and with the specific intent to destroy, in whole or in substantial part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group as such:

- (1) kills members of that group;
- (2) causes serious bodily injury to members of that group;
- (3) causes the permanent impairment of the mental faculties of members of the group through drugs, torture, or similar techniques;
- (4) subjects the group to conditions of life that are intended to cause the physical destruction of the group in whole or in part;
- (5) imposes measures intended to prevent births within the group; or
- (6) transfers by force children of the group to another group; or attempts to do so, shall be punished as provided in subsection (b).

**(b) Punishment for Basic Offense** – The punishment for an offense under subsection (a) is:

- (1) in the case of an offense under subsection (a)(1), where death results, by death or imprisonment for life and a fine of not more than \$1,000,000, or both; and
- (2) a fine of not more than \$1,000,000 or imprisonment for not more than twenty years, or both, in any other case.

**(c) Incitement Offense** – Whoever in a circumstance described in subsection (d) directly and publicly incites another to violate subsection (a) shall be fined not more than \$500,000 or imprisoned not more than five years, or both.

**(d) Required Circumstance for Offenses** – The circumstance referred to in subsections (a) and (c) is that:

- (1) the offense is committed within the United States; or
- (2) the alleged offender is a national of the United States (as defined in section 101 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101)).

**(e) Nonapplicability of Certain Limitations** – Notwithstanding section 3282 of this title, in the case of an offense under subsection (a)(1), an indictment may be found, or information instituted, at any time without limitation.

# Document Based Questions (DBQ) on the Genocide Resolution and Conventions

## General Document Analysis

1. List at least three ideas that you think represent the core meaning of the document.
2. Describe who drafted the document and when it was written.
3. Describe why the document was written, citing examples from the text.
4. Discuss the historical context of the document. (What was going on in the U.S. and/or the world at the time it was written?)
5. List at least three questions that the document raises for you.

## Document Specific Questions

1. The United Nations General Assembly Resolution on The Crime of Genocide (1946) states that the "punishment of the crime of genocide is a matter of international concern." Discuss why behavior that occurs within the borders of a sovereign nation is of international concern or may warrant international intervention.
2. The United Nations General Assembly Resolution on The Crime of Genocide (1946) states that the "denial of the right of existence of entire human groups...results in great losses to humanity in the form of cultural and other contributions represented by these human groups..." Discuss the ways in which genocide negatively impacts not only the targeted groups, but all of humanity.
3. The United Nations General Assembly Resolution on The Crime of Genocide (1946) states that the "denial of the right of existence of entire human groups...is contrary to moral law and to the spirit and aims of the United Nations." Discuss the "spirit and aims" of the United Nations and the ways in which the targeting of a group for oppression or destruction is contrary to these aims.
4. The United Nations General Assembly Resolution on The Crime of Genocide (1946) includes political groups as a potential target of genocide. However, the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948) omits mention of political groups. Do you think the targeting of a political group for destruction represents genocide? Why do you think the United Nations omitted this category in the final text of the convention?
5. Article 2 of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948) includes in the definition of genocide "...acts committed with intent to destroy." The U.S. Genocide Convention Implementation Act of 1987 uses similar language: "...with the specific intent to destroy." Do you think that intent is sufficient to charge an individual or public official with the crime of genocide? In what ways do you think intent can be established or demonstrated?
6. The United States was the first nation to sign the Genocide Convention in 1948, but did not ratify and implement the law until 1988. Why did it take the U.S. so long to accede to the Convention? Discuss the attitude toward sovereignty and resistance to international law that existed during the Cold War period.

## General Questions about the United Nations and International Human Rights

1. What are human rights? Where do they come from? Who has them?
2. What is the difference between human rights and civil rights?
3. What are the major categories of rights upheld by the United Nations?
4. What is the difference between a Resolution, a Covenant, a Treaty, a Protocol, a Convention and a Declaration?

5. What does it mean when a nation signs a treaty? Ratifies a treaty? Accedes to a treaty? What are the advantages and disadvantages of acceding to a treaty with "reservations"?
6. What is the role of the United Nations in protecting human rights? What tensions exist between the universality of rights and the sovereignty of individual nations?
7. Do you think the U.S. should subordinate its own political and judicial process to international norms?

## Lesson 3

# Genocide and the Global Response

## Rationale

The purpose of this lesson is to explore genocides that have taken place during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries including the Cambodian Genocide, the Rwandan Genocide, the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust. It also explores the world's response to genocide and some of the reasons for global silence in the face of mass atrocities. Students are introduced to the paintings of a Holocaust survivor and explore the theme of indifference as it relates to the artist's work and the plight of the Jews during the Holocaust. Students then engage in research on other cases of genocide in order to further understand the factors that have prevented the world community from responding more forcefully to these atrocities.

## Objectives

- Students will analyze the art of a Holocaust survivor and discuss the theme of indifference as it relates to the Holocaust.
- Students will investigate examples of world indifference and resistance to helping the Jewish people during World War II.
- Students will conduct research on genocides during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.
- Students will investigate patterns of global unresponsiveness to genocide.

## Age Range

Grades 10–12

## Time

45–60 minutes or 1–2 class periods for Part I; time for Part II will vary

## Requirements

Handouts and Resources:

- [Background on Background on the Yashinski Poem and Fritz Hirschberger Paintings](#)
- ["Indifference" Painting](#)
- [Artistic and Poetic Interpretations](#)
- [The Last Supper at Evian OR The Fish Stinks from the Head](#)
- [About The Last Supper at Evian OR The Fish Stinks from the Head Painting](#)
- [Global Indifference to the Holocaust](#)
- [Background and Resources: Armenian Genocide](#) (one for each student)
- [Background and Resources: Cambodian Genocide](#) (one for each student)
- [Background and Resources: Al-Anfal Campaign, Iraq](#) (one for each student)
- [Background and Resources: Bosnian Genocide](#) (one for each student)
- [Background and Resources: Rwandan Genocide](#) (one for each student)
- [Reasons for Global Unresponsiveness To Genocide](#) (one for each student)

Other Material:

- Board/Smart board, markers, LCD or overhead projector
- Books and web access for student research (optional)

## Key Words

Al-Anfal campaign  
Atrocity  
Auschwitz  
Betray  
Communist  
Concentration camp  
Convention  
Deportation  
Disappeared  
Displacement  
Emigrate  
Ethnic cleansing  
Evacuate  
Execution  
Extermination  
Final solution  
Genocide  
Immigrant  
Immigration  
Indifference  
Institutional  
Intervene  
Intervention  
Isolation  
Holocaust  
Khmer Rouge  
Killing center  
Legislation  
Massacre  
Nonintervention  
Nazi  
Perpetrate  
Persecution  
Propaganda  
Quota

## Techniques and Skills

analyzing visual art, brainstorming, case study, connecting past to present, cooperative group work, critical thinking, historical understanding, large and small group discussion, reading skills, research skills, using the internet, writing skills

## Advanced Preparation

- Reproduce handouts as directed above.
- Prepare the [“Indifference” Painting](#), [Artistic and Poetic Interpretations](#), [The Last Supper at Evian OR The Fish Stinks from the Head](#) and [About The Last Supper at Evian OR The Fish Stinks from the Head Painting](#) to be projected for class viewing.

## Procedures

### Part I (45–60 minutes)

1. Project the painting [“Indifference”](#) by Fritz Hirschberger, excluding the heading title so that only the painting is viewed. During this part of the lesson, do not reveal the title, accompanying text or any background information. Engage students in a discussion by asking some of the following questions:
  - What are your immediate thoughts and feelings upon seeing this painting? What mood does it evoke?
  - What do you think is taking place in this scene? What event or situation might be depicted?
  - Who do you think the people in the painting might be? What do you notice about their appearance (form, clothing, etc.)? What do you think is happening to them?
  - What do you notice about the background?
  - Where and when do you think the scene in the painting may have taken place? What was going on in the world at that time?
  - Why do you think the artist chose these colors? How do they make you feel?
  - What do you think the artist is trying to tell us? What artistic elements does the artist use to get his message across?
  - What do you think an appropriate title for this painting might be?
  - If you could ask the people in the painting a question, what would it be?
  - What other questions does this painting evoke for you?
2. Explain to students that the painting was created by the artist Fritz Hirschberger, who was a Holocaust survivor. Project the [Artistic and Poetic Interpretations](#) and tell students the poem that accompanies the painting was written by Edward Yashinski, a Jewish poet who also survived the Holocaust but died later in a Communist prison in Poland. Ask for a volunteer to read the poem aloud. Ask students how they feel the poem relates to the painting, and if it changes their earlier impression of the image.
3. Tell students that Hirschberger titled his painting “Indifference,” which is a word that also appears in the poem. Ask students what the word indifference means (lack of interest or concern), and pose the following questions:
  - Why do you think Hirschberger chose the word indifference for the title of his painting?
  - How does the painting depict or capture the feeling of indifference?
  - Do you agree with the sentiment in the poem that one should fear indifference more than death and betrayal? Why do you think the artist and poet may have felt this way?
  - Hirschberger and Yashinski were both Holocaust survivors. What experiences do you think they may have had with indifference?

Tell students that the painting is based upon a photograph taken by the Nazis at the death camp, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and that it suggests the isolation and hopelessness of the Jewish situation during the Holocaust. Provide additional information as appropriate from [Background on the Yashinski Poem and Fritz Hirschberger Paintings](#).
4. Ask students for examples of indifference on the part of individuals during the Holocaust (e.g., most did not protest or resist the Nazis, and did not shelter, hide, feed, or protect the victims). Ask if it is also possible for nations to act with

## Key Words (cont.)

Refugee  
Relocate  
Repatriation  
Repression  
Resettle  
Signatory  
Slaughter  
Sovereign  
Survivor  
Systematic  
Unresponsiveness  
Zionist

indifference, and solicit examples (e.g., most did not publicly condemn the slaughter of Jews, admit significant numbers of refugees, or challenge Hitler until mass extermination was already well under way).

5. Project [\*The Last Supper at Evian OR The Fish Stinks First from the Head\*](#), which is another painting from Fritz Hirschberger's Sur-Rational Paintings collection. Allow students to discuss what they think the painting depicts and what the significance of the title is. After some discussion, project [\*About The Last Supper at Evian OR The Fish Stinks First from the Head Painting\*](#) and ask for volunteers to read it aloud. Highlight the way in which the painting demonstrates world indifference to the plight of the Jews at the beginning of the Holocaust. Distribute the [\*Global Indifference to the Holocaust\*](#) to each student and read together, which offers three additional examples of world indifference or resistance to helping the Jews during the Holocaust.
6. Read aloud or project on board/smart board the following description of indifference by Eli Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor, celebrated writer, activist, and Nobel Peace Prize awardee:

“[Indifference is] a strange and unnatural state in which the lines blur between light and darkness, dusk and dawn, crime and punishment, cruelty and compassion, good and evil.”

Ask students to reflect silently on this quote and to think about why much of the world remained silent and indifferent during the Holocaust. Instruct them to record their thoughts as a journal entry short essay. Invite volunteers to share their responses aloud and explore with students some of the possible reasons for silence and indifference. Conclude the lesson by reading aloud the following passage from Wiesel's *Night*:

“Watchman, what of the night? So many victims in so many places need help. We need above all, to be shaken out of our indifference—the greatest source of danger in the world...For, remember, the opposite of love is not hate but indifference. The opposite of faith is not arrogance but indifference; the opposite of art is not ugliness but indifference. And the opposite of peace is indifference to both peace and war—indifference to hunger and persecution, to imprisonment and humiliation, indifference to torture and persecution.”

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**NOTE:** Though it is beyond the scope of this lesson to provide a detailed analysis of the reasons for global indifference and silence during the Holocaust, you may want to explore some of the following themes with students as a follow-up to your discussion: Isolationism, xenophobia/anti-foreign sentiment, immigration policy/anti-immigrant sentiment, institutional and individual anti-Semitism, distancing/dehumanization of victims, disbelief/unwillingness to face facts, limited interest in international issues, exclusive interest in domestic matters, “realpolitik,” narrow individual political interests, concern for economic well-being.

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## Part II (time will vary)

1. Explain to students that we are going to discuss genocides that have taken place during the 20th and 21st centuries. Ask them how they would define genocide in their own words. Explain that in 1948, the United Nations defined **genocide** as any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group, including:
  - killing members of the group;
  - causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
  - deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
  - imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; and
  - forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.
 Record this definition on the board/smart board so students can refer to it during the lesson.
2. Ask students if they are aware of examples of genocide that have occurred in the 20th and 21st centuries and list their responses on the board/smart board or chart paper. For each example offered, ask students if they know what actions the world took (or failed to take) in response, and chart their ideas. Tell students that the organization Genocide Watch cites examples of genocide or mass murder in over 70 countries (see Genocide Watch at [www.genocidewatch.com/genocide-and-politicide](http://www.genocidewatch.com/genocide-and-politicide)). Point out that in most of these cases, the world community failed to intervene to prevent the genocide or to halt it before killing on a massive scale had taken place.

3. Tell students that they will be working independently or in small groups to learn about one example of genocide and to explore global lack of responsiveness. Depending upon the time available and the ability level of your students, select one of the following methods for conducting research:
  - Divide the class into five groups and assign each group one of the following case studies: the Armenian genocide (1915–1923) the Cambodian genocide (1975–1979), the Al-Anfal genocide in Northern Iraq (1987–1988), the Bosnian genocide (1992–1995), and the Rwandan genocide (1994). Provide class time for groups to conduct research over a period of several days.
  - Ask students to choose one of the above case studies and to conduct research independently or with a partner for homework. Allow approximately one to two weeks for students to complete their research and to write a brief report.
  - Assign independent research on one of the above case studies (or another example of genocide) as an optional or extra credit assignment. Allow students one to two weeks to complete their research and to write a brief report.
4. Distribute the following handouts, which provide background information as well as web resources for investigating the five examples of genocide noted above.
  - [Background and Resources: Armenian Genocide](#)
  - [Background and Resources: Cambodian Genocide](#)
  - [Background and Resources: Al-Anfal Campaign, Iraq](#)
  - [Background and Resources: Bosnian Genocide](#)
  - [Background and Resources: Rwandan Genocide](#)

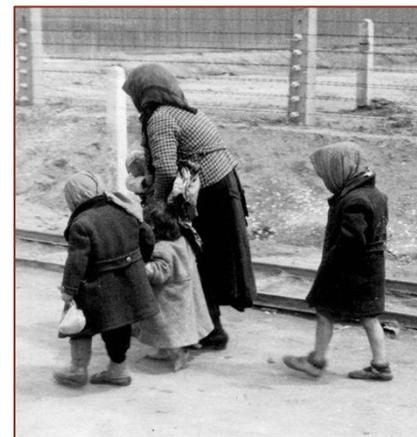
Instruct students to consult at least three sources as they conduct their research, and to write a research paper that includes the following information: (a) a summary of what occurred; (b) response by the world community before, during and after the genocide; (c) reasons why the world failed to intervene to prevent or halt the genocide; (d) in retrospect, actions that the world community might have taken to prevent or halt the genocide.

5. Set aside class time for students to present their research and to answer questions from their classmates. Keep the discussion focused on factors that kept the world community from taking decisive action to prevent or halt each case of genocide. Encourage students to note similarities across each example and to highlight patterns that emerge regarding the global response to genocide. In order to learn more about the global unresponsiveness to genocide, students can refer to [Reasons for Global Unresponsiveness to Genocide](#) handout and other online resources they can find.
6. Conclude the lesson by asking students what they think the United Nations, United States and other countries should do to prevent or halt current and future instances of genocide. Ask students to consider what individuals can do to pressure the world community to act.

# Background on the Yashinski Poem and Fritz Hirschberger Paintings

## About the “Indifference” Painting

The poem by Edward Yashinski—a Jewish poet who survived the Holocaust only to die in a Communist prison in Poland—suggests the isolation and hopelessness of the Jewish situation. The image is based upon the photograph on the right taken by the Nazis at Auschwitz-Birkenau. It raises questions about Holocaust representation. It is an effective painting, but whose image is it—the artist’s? The Nazi’s? Does the artistic interpretation of a photograph help to redeem it? Note the victims in this image are women and children. During the Holocaust, 1.5 million Jewish children were killed. Thus, the focus on children helps to answer the question of why the Jews were targeted. According to the racial ideology of the Nazis, their crime was simply being born a Jew.



Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-74237-004/CC-BY-SA

## About the Artist

Fritz Hirschberger was born in 1912 in Dresden, Germany to a Jewish father and a Catholic mother, who raised him as a Jew. In October 1938 Fritz and his family were arrested and, with thirty minutes notice, deported to Poland. When Hitler attacked Poland in 1939, Hirschberger fought the Nazi invasion with a Polish artillery unit and later fled to the Soviet Union after the collapse of the Polish army. He was arrested in the Ukraine and sentenced to 20 years in a Soviet prison near the Arctic Circle for having “illegally entered the country” and for being a member of a Zionist organization. Following Hitler’s invasion of the Soviet Union, Hirschberger was classified as a political prisoner and was released in 1941 to serve in the Polish army, where he fought in the Middle East, North Africa, Italy, and Germany. He was decorated five times by the British and Poles. Hirschberger was the only member of his family to survive the Holocaust. Following the war, he studied art in London and married a woman named Gisela, who was an old friend from Dresden. They eventually moved to the United States, where Fritz pursued a career in both manufacturing and painting. In 1991, he was awarded the Bronze Cross by President Lech Walesa of Poland. Fritz Hirschberger died in 2004.

## About the Fritz Hirschberger Sur-Rational Paintings

The paintings “Indifference” and “The Last Supper at Evian or The Fish Stinks from the Head” are a part of a collection that represent an attempt by the artist, a Holocaust survivor, to depict what he and his family went through during the period from 1938 through the end of World War II in 1945. He invented the term Sur-Rational which means beyond the reasonable. The entire Sur-Rational series tells stories through the combination of painting with text based on the medieval German “moritat” or song of “deadly deed.” The lyrics of the moritat were usually based on a heinous crime and performed by strolling minstrels in combination with illustrations painted on a banner, similar to comic strips of the contemporary era. Hirschberger’s paintings are not “factual,” but do contain historical references and are intended to make a strong metaphorical impact. They ask questions of the viewer that demand to be answered.

## Style of the Paintings

Hirschberger paints in a style that is derived from the German expressionism tradition of the 1920s and also from what is termed a “naïve” or primitive style. The figures sometimes appear cartoonish, but are subverted by the seriousness of the themes. The paint used is transparent, an effect that is heightened by glazing with an oil-based medium. Color plays an important role in these works. Purples and reds are dominant—colors one would not expect in paintings about the Holocaust—and give the work a religious quality. Many of the works explore the relationship between Judaism and Christianity in the form of Jesus (the Jew) as well as saintly figures. In a sense, the paintings in this series might be taken as a modern iconography about the passion of the Jewish people.

## Do the Paintings Accuse?

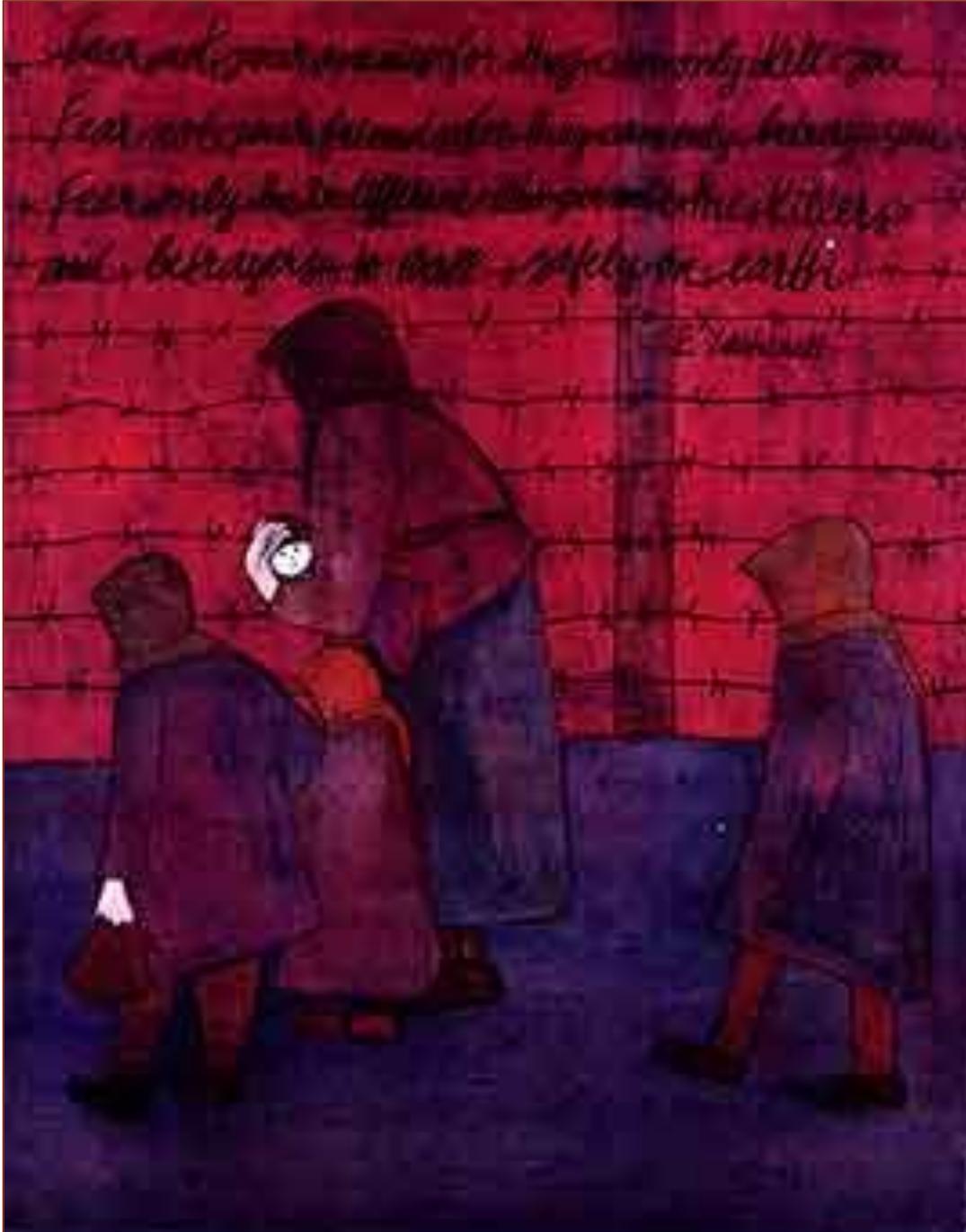
Occasionally, commentators accuse the artist of being unforgiving or placing too much blame for the Holocaust on the Church. In fact, the first exhibition of these paintings was supported by the Archbishopric of Dresden, Germany. Some of the strongest supporters of the exhibit have been Catholic Colleges and seminaries. This is probably because of the Papal Encyclical, “We Remember,” from 1998, which admits Christian failure during the Holocaust. Hirschberger’s paintings, however, do speak to an essential truth: that had Jesus been alive in 1943, he would have wound up at Auschwitz, as he had four Jewish grandparents and was, according to Nazi law, a racial Jew. However, the artist asserts that the paintings are not anti-Christian. They merely pose difficult and troubling questions that have to be thought through and answered. Hence, the paintings become the basis for conversation or dialogue.

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Text and art by Fritz Hirschberger are from “Fritz Hirschberger: Sur-Rational Paintings” and reprinted with permission of the Regis Foundation, Minneapolis, MN. Visit <http://chgs.umn.edu/museum/exhibitions/surRational/> to view the entire series of paintings. For more information, contact the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies: Dr. Stephen Feinstein, Director, tel: (612) 626-2235, email: [feins001@umn.edu](mailto:feins001@umn.edu), web: <http://www.chgs.umn.edu>.

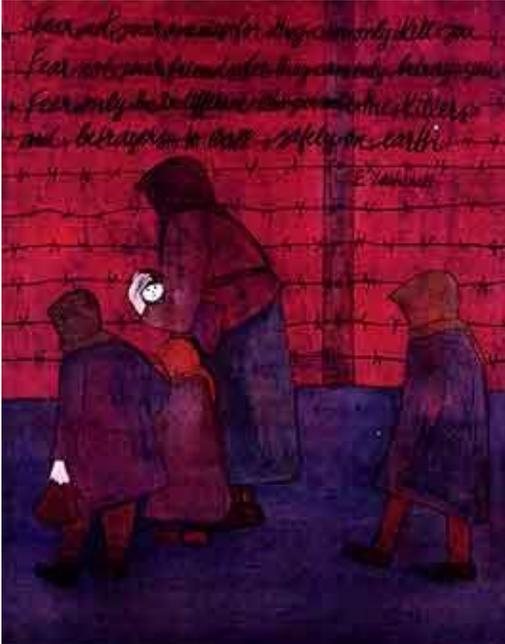
# “Indifference” Painting

by Fritz Hirschberger



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## Artistic and Poetic Interpretations



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“Fear not your enemies,  
for they can only kill you.  
Fear not your friends, for  
they can only betray you.  
Fear only the indifferent,  
who permit the killers and  
betrayers to walk safely  
on the earth.”

—Edward Yashinski, Yiddish poet who survived the Shoah  
only to die in a Communist prison in Poland.

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Poem excerpted by Edward Yashinski from Haskel Lookstein, *Were We Our Brothers' Keepers?: The Public Response of American Jews to the Holocaust, 1938–1944* (Bridgeport: Hartmore House, 1985).

# The Last Supper at Evian OR The Fish Stinks from the Head

by Fritz Hirschberger



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## About The Last Supper at Evian OR The Fish Stinks from the Head Painting

The title of this painting derives from an old Greek proverb and suggests that the problem of indifference to the plight of the Jews originated from world leaders.

Delegates from over thirty nations met at Evian, France, from July 6–14, 1938 to find a solution to the plight of the “involuntary immigrants” (Jews who had fled Nazi Germany to save their lives). With the exceptions of Denmark and the Netherlands, the refugees were either refused admittance or only accepted in small numbers under limited quotas. The Dominican Republic offered to take in 100,000 Jews, but only 645 refugees actually arrived on the island. (Ironically, the Dominican Republic agreed to admit the Jewish refugees in part as compensation for a 1937 order that led to the slaughter of 25,000–30,000 illegal immigrants from Haiti, and which was considered to be an act of genocide by some).

The Evian conference represents a critical turning point in Hitler’s policy toward the Jews. It confirmed his suspicion that the rest of the world would not act with force to protect them. Emigration for German and Austrian Jews soon became difficult, and Nazi plans later turned from the removal of Jews to the “Final Solution”—extermination.

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Text from “Fritz Hirschberger: Sur-Rational Paintings” and reprinted with permission of the Regis Foundation, Minneapolis, MN. Visit <http://chgs.umn.edu/museum/exhibitions/surRational/> to view the entire series of paintings.

# Global Indifference to the Holocaust

*The following are just a few examples of world indifference during the Holocaust or outright resistance to the rescue of European Jews from the Nazi onslaught.*

**The USS St. Louis** — The USS St. Louis, one of the last ships to leave Nazi Germany before the war, set sail for Cuba in May 1939. The 937 Jewish refugees on board each carried a valid visa for temporary entry into Cuba. Unknown to them, their landing permits, issued by the corrupt Cuban director of immigration, had already been invalidated by the Cuban government and the passengers were refused entry. The refugees appealed to the United States, but were refused admittance due to a restrictive immigration policy and a reluctance to interfere with Cuban affairs. After waiting for 12 days in the port of Havana and off the Miami coast, the boat was forced to return to Europe. Fearful of returning to Germany, the passengers pleaded with world leaders to offer them refuge. Belgium offered to take in 200 refugees and the British, French and Dutch governments each agreed to grant temporary asylum to the refugees until homes in other countries could be found. With the German occupation of Western Europe in the ensuing years, most of the former passengers once again fell under Nazi rule and were subject to anti-Jewish legislation. A fortunate few succeeded in emigrating or escaping, but by the end of 1941 it became virtually impossible for Jews to flee the continent. Starting in 1942, the Nazis began deportations from Western Europe to the killing centers in the east.

**Wagner-Rogers Legislation** — Legislation was introduced in the United States Congress in 1939 by Rep. Robert Wagner to admit a total of 20,000 Jewish children over a two-year period above the refugee quota applicable at the time. The legislation was inspired by similar efforts by the Dutch and British government to save Jewish children from Nazi terror. The legislation was amended in committee to admit the 20,000 children only if the number of Jewish refugees admitted under the regular quota was reduced by 20,000. The bill died in the House after the sponsor withdrew his support for the bill in frustration.

**Bermuda Conference** — As the Germans advanced through Europe, more Jews and others who were targets of Nazi racial policies came under Nazi control. By 1943 the war had created millions of refugees in Europe. The Bermuda Conference, jointly sponsored by the United States and Great Britain, was held in April 1943 to discuss solutions to the refugee problem. When the Conference finally wrapped up its 12 days of secret deliberations, very little had been achieved. The delegates' list of proposals included: the decision "that no approach be made to Hitler for the release of potential refugees;" suggestions for helping refugees leave Spain; and a declaration on the postwar repatriation of refugees. Even though the conferees decided to keep their report secret, they did make it clear to the press that most of the proposals submitted to the conference had been rejected. Following the conference, one Jewish organization took out a three-quarter page advertisement in *The New York Times* with the headline "To 5,000,000 Jews in the Nazi Death-Trap Bermuda Was a 'Cruel Mockery.'"

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*Sources:*

American Experience: America and the Holocaust, PBS, [www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/holocaust/](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/holocaust/)

Immigration Policies, Jewish Virtual Library, [www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/grobim.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/grobim.html)

SS St. Louis by Blechner, Anthony, [www.blechner.com/ssstlouis](http://www.blechner.com/ssstlouis)

Voyage of the St. Louis, United States Holocaust Museum, [www.ushmm.org/stlouis](http://www.ushmm.org/stlouis)

# Background and Resources: Armenian Genocide

## 1915–1923, Cumulative Civilian Death Toll: 1.5 million

In 1915, the government of the Ottoman Empire turned against a segment of its own population through a plan to systematically decimate its civilian population of Armenian people. Historically, though the Armenian people had been subjected to ongoing religious intolerance that included unjust treatment, inequitable tax rates and diminished legal and civil rights, they continued to thrive, attaining higher levels of education and wealth than other groups. Resentment over the success of Armenians was commonplace, and when international events precipitated a position of insecurity and weakness in the Ottoman Empire, the resentment and prejudice toward the Armenian population made them a primary target.

Most sources agree that there were about two million Armenians in the Ottoman Empire at the time when the genocide began. The genocide began with the ruling government arresting and executing several hundred Armenian intellectuals. After that, Armenian people were removed from their homes and sent on death marches through the desert without food or water. Most of the atrocities were carried out during World War I between the 1915 and 1918, when the Armenian people were subjected to deportation, expropriation, abduction, torture, massacre and starvation. Women and children were abducted and abused and the entire wealth of the Armenian people was stolen. There was a short period of calm at the end of World War I, and then the atrocities resumed between 1920 and 1923, when the remaining Armenians were subjected to further massacre and removal.

At the time of the Armenian Genocide, there were some accepted international rules and customs of war to protect civilian populations, but none of these covered a government's treatment of its own people. Only after World War II were aspects of such treatment covered in the United Nations Genocide Convention (UNGG).

### Web Resources

- The Armenian Genocide (United to End Genocide), <http://endgenocide.org/learn/past-genocides/the-armenian-genocide/>
- Armenian Genocide (History), [www.history.com/topics/armenian-genocide](http://www.history.com/topics/armenian-genocide)
- Armenian Genocide Testimony Series (USC Shoah Foundation), <https://sfi.usc.edu/content/30-days-armenian-genocide-testimonies>
- Armenian Genocide (Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, University of Minnesota), <https://cla.umn.edu/chgs/holocaust-genocide-education/resource-guides/armenia>
- Remembering the Armenian Genocide (*The New Yorker*, April 21, 2015), [www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/remembering-the-armenian-genocide](http://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/remembering-the-armenian-genocide)

# Background and Resources: Cambodian Genocide

## 1975–1979, Cumulative Civilian Death Toll: Nearly 2 million

In 1975 the Communist Party of Kampuchea, known as Khmer Rouge (KR), defeated the U.S.-backed Khmer Republic under the leadership of Lon Nol and seized control of the country's capital, Phnom Penh. At first, many Cambodians welcomed the overthrow of the corrupt Lon Nol government. However, the KR soon began a ruthless campaign to reconstruct Cambodia into a collective of farms according to the Chinese communist agricultural model of Mao Zedong.

Under threat of death, the residents were forced to relocate to the countryside where they would live in communes and work as unpaid laborers under impossible conditions. Those who refused to leave their homes or didn't vacate quickly enough (including the sick and elderly) were killed. Factories, schools and hospitals were shut down and people were stripped of all civil rights. Religion was banned and temples were destroyed. Music and radios were forbidden. Anyone perceived to be in opposition—including doctors, lawyers, teachers, and other educated and professional people—were eliminated along with all “un-communist” elements of Cambodian society. People were shot for simply knowing a foreign language or wearing glasses and were discouraged from forming personal relationships or expressing affection. The country was “cleansed” of Vietnamese, Chinese and Thai nationals as well as Muslims and Buddhist monks. Children were taken from their parents and placed into forced labor camps, where they were “reeducated.”

In 1978 Vietnam invaded Cambodia to stop Khmer Rouge border attacks and defeated the murderous regime in two weeks. By that time, nearly two million people had died from execution, starvation, disease and exhaustion, making the Cambodian genocide one of the most devastating in human history.

### Web Resources

- Cambodia 1975 (Peace Pledge Union), [www.ppu.org.uk/genocide/g\\_cambodia.html](http://www.ppu.org.uk/genocide/g_cambodia.html)
- Cambodia: 1975–1979 (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum), [www.ushmm.org/confront-genocide/cases/cambodia/introduction/cambodia-1975](http://www.ushmm.org/confront-genocide/cases/cambodia/introduction/cambodia-1975)
- The Cambodian Genocide (United to End Genocide), <http://endgenocide.org/learn/past-genocides/the-cambodian-genocide/>
- Cambodia: Oral Histories and Biographies (The Mekong Network), [www.mekong.net/cambodia/oral\\_hst.htm](http://www.mekong.net/cambodia/oral_hst.htm)
- Cambodian Genocide (World Without Genocide), <http://worldwithoutgenocide.org/genocides-and-conflicts/cambodia>
- Cambodian Genocide Program (Yale University), <https://gsp.yale.edu/case-studies/cambodian-genocide-program>

# Background and Resources: Al-Anfal Campaign, Iraq

**1987–1988, Cumulative Civilian Death Toll: 182,000**

The Al-Anfal campaign was an organized attempt by the Iraqi regime under Saddam Hussein to stamp out Kurdish efforts toward political independence. At the end of the Iran-Iraq war, the Kurdish region in northern Iraq was the scene of an attempt by Iranian forces allied with the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan to capture Iraqi territory. Iraq had already begun to use chemical weapons in 1987 to battle the Kurdish opposition, and this brutal repression became an organized and institutionalized genocide in 1988 that took place in eight stages.

Throughout the Al-Anfal campaign, the Iraqis used chemical weapons and heavy bombardments to slaughter civilian populations. The operation also involved the destruction of villages, mass executions and deportations of civilians including women and children. Those who sought medical attention in the urban centers for the treatment of exposure to chemical agents were rounded up and “disappeared.”

In all an estimated 182,000 Kurds lost their lives and/or disappeared as a result of the genocidal campaign. In addition, hundreds of thousands of Kurdish civilians were displaced from their homes as approximately 4,500 villages were destroyed. The most widely publicized incident occurred in the Kurdish town of Halabja, where on March 16, 1988 an estimated 5,000 men, women and children lost their lives as a result of poison attack. Over 10,000 were wounded and to this day suffer the effects caused by exposure to chemical agents.

## Web Resources

- Kurdish Genocide (The Kurdish Project), <https://thekurdishproject.org/history-and-culture/kurdish-history/kurdistan-genocide/>
- Anfal Campaign and Kurdish (Kurdistan Regional Government, Representation in the United States), <https://us.gov.krd/en/issues/anfal-campaign-and-kurdish-genocide/>
- Genocide in Iraq: The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds (Human Rights Watch), [www.hrw.org/reports/1993/iraqanfal/](http://www.hrw.org/reports/1993/iraqanfal/)
- Kurds at the Crossroads (Frontline, PBS), [www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/iraq203/crossroads03.html](http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/iraq203/crossroads03.html), [www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/iraq501/events\\_anfal.html](http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/iraq501/events_anfal.html)

# Background and Resources: Bosnian Genocide

## 1992–1995, Cumulative Civilian Death Toll: 100,000

Bosnia is one of several small countries that emerged from the division of Yugoslavia, a country created after World War I and composed of ethnic and religious groups that had long been bitter rivals—the Orthodox Christian Serbs, Catholic Croats and Muslim Albanians. After the death of the Communist leader, Tito, in 1980, Yugoslavia went through a period of political chaos that resulted in the rise of the Serbian leader, Slobodan Milosevic, who used religious hatred to gain power and quickly ignited conflict between Serbs and Muslims.

After Bosnia—a mostly Muslim nation—declared independence in 1992, Milosevic launched an attack. Innocent civilians were gunned down in the streets of the capitol city, Sarajevo, including over 3,500 children. As the Serbs gained ground, they systematically rounded up and executed Muslims, mass raped women and girls, forced boys and men into concentration camps, and relocated entire towns. In addition, Muslim mosques and historic architecture were destroyed. The term "ethnic cleansing" was coined to describe the reign of terror being waged by Milosevic and the Serbian forces.

Beginning in 1993, after failed diplomatic efforts, the U.S. and NATO launched air strikes against the Serbs, who retaliated by taking hundreds of U.N. peacekeepers as hostages and turning them into human shields. During one brutal episode, the infamous General Ratko Mladic led the systematic slaughter of nearly 8,000 men and boys between the ages of twelve and sixty in the "safe haven" of Srebrenica.

In 1995 a massive NATO bombing campaign and the advancement of Muslim and Croat troops led ultimately to a peace accord. By this time, however, an estimated 100,000 civilians had been systematically murdered, more than 20,000 people were missing, and two million people had become refugees.

### Web Resources

- The Bosnian War and Srebrenica Genocide (United to End Genocide), <http://endgenocide.org/learn/past-genocides/the-bosnian-war-and-srebrenica-genocide/>
- Bosnia-Herzegovina (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum), [www.ushmm.org/confront-genocide/cases/bosnia-herzegovina](http://www.ushmm.org/confront-genocide/cases/bosnia-herzegovina)
- Bosnian Genocide (History), [www.history.com/topics/bosnian-genocide](http://www.history.com/topics/bosnian-genocide)
- Bosnian Genocide (World Without Genocide), <http://worldwithoutgenocide.org/genocides-and-conflicts/bosnia>
- Timeline: Bosnia-Herzegovina; Milosevic's Yugoslavia (BBC News), [www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17212376](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17212376), [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/in\\_depth/europe/2000/milosevic\\_yugoslavia/default.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/in_depth/europe/2000/milosevic_yugoslavia/default.stm)

# Background and Resources: Rwandan Genocide

## 1994, Cumulative Civilian Death Toll: 800,000

Rwanda, a small country in Central Africa, is comprised of two main ethnic groups, the Hutu and the Tutsi. Although the Hutus make up approximately 90% of the population, the Tutsis were placed in a more privileged position by the colonial Belgian rulers and dominated the Hutu peasants for decades. Following independence from Belgium in 1962, the Hutu majority seized power and exacted reprisals on the Tutsis through systematic discrimination and violence. As a result, over 200,000 Tutsis fled to neighboring countries and formed a rebel guerrilla army, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF).

In 1990 the RPF invaded Rwanda, which resulted in a peace accord that established a power sharing arrangement between the Hutus and Tutsis, an agreement that left Hutu extremist factions bitter. In 1994 Hutu President Habyarimana was assassinated when his plane was shot down near Kigali airport. Rwanda erupted immediately into violence as Hutu extremists began executing Tutsi leaders and moderate Hutu politicians. The killings spread to the countryside, where Hutu forces carried out the mass extermination of Tutsi civilians, mostly with machetes and clubs. The Rwandan state radio, controlled by Hutu extremists, further encouraged the killings by broadcasting non-stop hate propaganda and identifying the locations of Tutsis in hiding.

Some of the worst massacres took place in churches and hospitals, where Tutsi civilians sought safe haven. Hutu civilians were forced to kill their Tutsi neighbors and Tutsis were forced to kill their own family members. After just over a month, the Red Cross estimated that half a million Tutsis had already been slaughtered, with the rate of killing reaching 10,000 per day. Bodies were now commonly seen floating down the Kigara River into Lake Victoria.

Following the murder of ten members of a Belgian peacekeeping force, Western countries evacuated its personnel, leaving the Rwandans virtually alone to deal with the murderous Hutu militia. The killings ended only when armed Tutsi rebels, invading from neighboring countries, defeated the Hutus and halted the genocide in July 1994. By then, over one-tenth of the population—an estimated 800,000 people—had been killed. In the aftermath of the genocide, hundreds of thousands of Hutu refugees fled into eastern Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo). The violence and its memory continue to affect the region.

## Web Resources

- The Rwandan Genocide (United to End Genocide), <http://endgenocide.org/learn/past-genocides/the-rwandan-genocide/>
- The Rwandan Genocide (History), [www.history.com/topics/rwandan-genocide](http://www.history.com/topics/rwandan-genocide)
- Genocide in Rwanda (United Human Rights Council), [www.unitedhumanrights.org/genocide/genocide-in-rwanda](http://www.unitedhumanrights.org/genocide/genocide-in-rwanda)
- Rwanda (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum), [www.ushmm.org/confront-genocide/cases/rwanda](http://www.ushmm.org/confront-genocide/cases/rwanda)
- Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda (Human Rights Watch), [www.hrw.org/report/1999/03/01/leave-none-tell-story/genocide-rwanda](http://www.hrw.org/report/1999/03/01/leave-none-tell-story/genocide-rwanda)
- Rwandan Genocide (World Without Genocide), <http://worldwithoutgenocide.org/genocides-and-conflicts/rwandan-genocide>

# Reasons for Global Unresponsiveness to Genocide

Despite the promise of “never again” following the Nazi Holocaust and the approximately 140 signatories to the Genocide Convention, instances of mass slaughter and genocide have occurred numerous times since World War II without adequate intervention by the world community. Though the reasons for nonintervention are complex and vary across situations, the following ideas represent recurring motivations that may provide insight into the problem of global unresponsiveness. A broad articulation of reasons is followed by more specific motivations for five instances of genocide during which the U.S. and the world community did not intervene until hundreds of thousands or even millions of deaths had already occurred—Cambodia, Northern Iraq, Bosnia, the Armenian population and Rwanda. Though an in-depth analysis is beyond the scope of this resource, it is hoped that the detailed listing will provide themes that can be expanded upon in class through further research and investigation.

## Political/Economic Factors

- The inviolability of state sovereignty and unwillingness to interfere in what are considered to be the internal matters of an autonomous nation remain sacrosanct principles.
- Political leaders often reason that nonintervention carries no political risk while intervention brings a high risk of public disapproval.
- Political leaders often interpret societal silence as indifference and fear a lack of public support for intervention.
- Political leaders will often base their decision to intervene on national interests; where there are no political or economic interests, it is frequently considered imprudent to intervene.
- The use of armed force is often deemed acceptable only as a last resort; to protect vital national interests; where winning is certain; and where public support is present.

## Moral/Ethical Factors

- Sometimes economic or political interests in a country—even one with a genocidal regime—outweigh moral concerns; intervention may be seen as jeopardizing national interests.
- Arguing moral imperative over national interest is sometimes seen as out of the mainstream.
- The label of genocide is frequently avoided for fear of a moral imperative to act.
- There is sometimes a belief that it is premature or unethical to intervene while information and intelligence are still being gathered, and before there is a “complete picture.”
- There is often a fear that intervention will make things worse for the victims.
- Individual nations are often unwilling to risk the lives of their soldiers.

## Public Awareness and Interest

- Individuals and citizen groups with influence do not organize, dissent, and apply public pressure with enough magnitude to force political action.
- Mainstream media coverage often reflects national priorities and public “appetite,” which contributes to a lack of public awareness and sense of urgency.
- There is often a limited expatriate community locally that can represent the interests of the targeted population.

## Flawed Assumptions

- There is sometimes an assumption that Western style diplomacy and peace talks will work, and that official heads of state are credible negotiators (even though they may be part of a genocidal regime).
- A related assumption is that official heads of state are rational actors and will not inflict gratuitous violence upon civilian populations.

- There is often an erroneous belief that a conflict is two-sided, rooted in ethnic or religious “feuds” that have long histories, and are therefore inevitable and unpreventable.
- Sometimes there is a belief that intervention will make things worse for the victims.
- The scope and brutality of genocidal crimes are often unbelievable to authorities, who may deny or question the veracity of refugee claims and reports of atrocities.
- The Holocaust is often the yardstick against which other alleged genocides are measured-situations that are not perceived to be on the same scale are often downplayed.
- Sometimes situations are wrongly categorized as war and genocidal violence is understood to be the “collateral damage” of war; it is often difficult for people to believe that mass murder of a group is a primary aim rather than a consequence of conflict.
- Sometimes the victims of genocide are blamed for bringing on their own repression.
- Sometimes military intervention is seen as the only solution and “soft intervention” or sanctions are dismissed as ineffective.

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#### Reference

Power, Samantha (2002). *“A Problem from Hell”: America and the Age of Genocide*. New York: Perennial.

## Lesson 4

# Genocide in Darfur: Is the World Doing Enough?

## Rationale

The purpose of this lesson is for students to learn about the genocide in Darfur (Sudan), and to explore the reasons why the world has not interceded when at the end of Holocaust the international community said “never again.” Referring to the Genocide Convention, students debate the obligations of the international community to intervene in Darfur, and discuss the resistance of world governments to respond. This lesson is designed to teach students that ordinary citizens can make a difference by taking action and speaking out on behalf of genocide victims, even as leaders of the world stand by. The final part of the lesson empowers students to take action against genocide by implementing various student-led projects and humanitarian campaigns to aid Darfur.

[NOTE: Given the tasks students will be asked to engage in throughout this lesson, it is preferable for students to have gone through Lessons 1–3 of this unit, prior to implementing Lesson 4. Given the time-sensitive nature of this lesson, it is advisable to consult sources on the most recent events occurring in Darfur. A list of internet sources is provided in the attached handout, [Darfur: Internet Links & Sources](#). Should this lesson become outdated, it may also be used as a model for exploring a case of genocide that may be occurring currently (check [www.genocidewatch.com](http://www.genocidewatch.com) for current details).

This lesson does not provide a full cultural or historical overview of Darfur (Sudan). For further information, you may wish to refer students to the following sources: (1) [Historical Dictionary of the Sudan](#), Vol. 85 of *African Historical Dictionaries*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Richard Lobban, Robert S. Kramer, and Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2002) and (2) [The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars](#) of *African Issues*, Douglas Hamilton Johnson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).]

## Objectives

- Students will learn about the violence in Darfur (Sudan) through fact finding, research and analysis of primary sources.
- Students will develop a greater understanding of international law.
- Students will analyze forms of global intervention and reasons for responsiveness to acts of genocide.
- Students will create an action plan to implement a humanitarian project in their school and community to aid citizens of Darfur.

## Age Range

Grades 10–12

## Time

2 hours or 3 class periods

## Requirements

Handouts and Resources:

- [Peter Biro: A Journalist's Diary](#) (one for each student)
- [Darfur: The Facts](#) (one for each student)
- [Darfur: Internet Links & Sources](#) (one for each student)

## Key Words

Amburu  
 Arab  
 Bahai  
 Cariari  
 Chad  
 Civilian  
 Committee on Conscience of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Darfur  
 Decimated  
 Dehydration  
 Destabilization  
 Displacement  
 Doctors Without Borders  
 Enslavement  
 Ethnic  
 Genocide  
 Humanitarian  
 Inhabitant  
 International Rescue Committee  
 Janjaweed  
 Justice Equality Movement  
 Malnourished  
 Massacre  
 Militia  
 Millet  
 Mosque  
 Muslim  
 Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights  
 Refugees  
 Re-hydration

- [United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide](#) (one for each student)
- [The Genocide Convention Fact Sheet](#) (one copy for each student)
- [Survivors of Rwanda Genocide, Nazi Holocaust Find Common Ground](#) (one copy for each student)
- [Darfur: Student Action](#) (one copy for each student)

Other Material:

- chart paper, markers, masking tape, journals (one for each student)

### Key Words (cont.)

Sorghum  
Sudan  
Sudanese Army  
Sudan Liberation Army  
Suppress  
Sustenance  
UNICEF  
USAID

### Advanced Preparation

- Reproduce handouts as directed above.
- Write the following headings on four sheets of chart paper, one heading per paper, and set them aside: “Displacement”, “Devastation & Destruction”, “Delivery of Aide”, “Latest Developments” and “Questions we still have.” (See Part I #3.)
- Write each of the three quotes in Part II #5 on separate sheets of chart paper.

### Techniques and Skills

analyzing maps, analyzing primary documents, brainstorming, building an action plan, connecting past to present, consensus building, cooperative group work, critical thinking, debate, forming opinions, large and small group discussion, media literacy, reading skills, research skills, social action skills, using the Internet, writing skills

### Procedures

#### Part I (40 minutes)

1. Inform students that they will be working in pairs for the first part of this lesson. Once students have been paired, distribute the [Peter Biro: a Journalist Diary](#) handout, one to each student.
2. In pairs, ask students to read through the diary, and consider the following questions:
  - What is the time and place of Peter Biro’s diary?
  - Why did Peter Biro submit his diary excerpts from Chad’s northeastern border?
  - Do we know from reading Peter Biro’s diary why people left their homeland of Darfur?
  - What are some of the ways that the refugees from Darfur were targeted and attacked in their home towns?
  - What are some of the devastating effects experienced by the refugees as a result of the violence in Darfur?
  - Peter Biro writes extensively about the death of the livestock. Why is this particularly devastating for the Sudanese refugees?
  - What are the some of the forms of humanitarian aide mentioned in Peter Biro’s diary?
  - The last entry in Peter Biro’s diary is dated May 16, 2004, what is the situation in Darfur today? (Note: Assure students that they will have an opportunity to learn more about the situation in Darfur, should they not offer responses to this question.)
3. Post five separate pieces of chart paper with the following headers: “Displacement”, “Devastation & Destruction”, “Delivery of Aide”, “Latest Developments” and “Questions we still have.”
4. Hold a class discussion on the questions posed above, chart their responses or questions under the corresponding categories (i.e., responses about time, place, or ways that the Sudanese refugees were displaced would be charted under “Displacement”; responses about the devastating effects experienced by the refugees would be charted under “Devastation & Destruction”; questions not answered in the diary would be charted under “Questions we still have?”; and so forth).
5. Distribute a copy of the [Darfur: The Facts](#) handout to each student. In their same pairs, ask students to review the fact sheet and take note of any additional information not currently listed on the posted chart paper.
6. Remind students that events in Darfur develop with every passing day; therefore it is important to remember that the fact sheet on Darfur is a living document. Students should conduct further research using the various sources listed on the

[Darfur: Internet Links & Sources](#) handout to ensure they have the most recent information about the conflict in Darfur, and to answer any of the questions listed on the flipchart, "Questions we still have?"

7. Once students have had time to digest all of the facts on Darfur, ask students if they found additional information that should be added to the posted chart paper. Chart their responses on the corresponding chart paper.

## Part II (40 minutes)

1. For the second part of the lesson, divide students into groups of 4–5.
2. Distribute copies of the [United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide](#) and [The Genocide Convention Fact Sheet](#) to each student.
3. In their groups, ask students to discuss the following questions using the Genocide Convention as a reference:
  - Based on the evidence, should the situation in Darfur be legally termed “genocide” by the United Nations and the world community?
  - Why or why not?
  - Has Sudan ratified the Genocide Convention, and what does this mean in terms of its legal commitments?
4. Once each group has had an opportunity to discuss the questions, ask each group to appoint a reporter to present the group’s argument on each of the questions above. Each group reporter should present their group’s position to the class.
5. Once each group has had an opportunity to present, post the following three quotes prepared in advance and ask three volunteers (one per quote) to read aloud to the class:

**Quote 1:** *U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell determined Thursday that the violence in Sudan's Darfur region, which has killed some 50,000 people and displaced more than 1 million, constitutes genocide. "We concluded that genocide has been committed in Darfur and that the government of Sudan and the Janjaweed (Arab militia) bear responsibility—and genocide may still be occurring," Powell said in prepared remarks to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.*

—Krishnadev Calamur, United Press International, Washington, DC, Sep. 9, 2004

**Quote 2:** *A U.N. commission investigating atrocities in Sudan has concluded that the government did not pursue a policy of genocide in the Darfur region but that Khartoum and government-sponsored Arab militias known as the Janjaweed engaged in "widespread and systematic" abuse that may constitute crimes against humanity.*

—Colum Lynch, *The Washington Post* Staff Writer, “U.N. Panel Finds No Genocide in Darfur but Urges Tribunals,” February 1, 2005

**Quote 3:** *...Call it civil war, call it ethnic cleansing, call it genocide, call it "none of the above." The reality is the same. There are people in Darfur who desperately need the help of the international community.*

—Former U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, in his testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Sept. 9, 2004 (quoted by CBS News Online, “The Genocide Convention,” September 20, 2004)

6. Ask students the following questions in reaction to these quotes:
  - a. Is it important that the United Nations did not find that the violence in Darfur constituted “genocide” [U.N. International of Inquiry on Darfur]? Why or why not?
  - b. Did the U.N.’s determination affect whether other countries responded or intervened in Darfur?
  - c. Considering the various reasons for global unresponsiveness discussed in Lesson 3, “Genocide and the Global Response”: Why would countries be resistant to intervening when mass atrocities have occurred in Darfur?
  - d. What are the different ways the world could intervene or respond in the case of genocide in Darfur?
  - e. Is not taking action a form of action?

7. **Journal assignment (can be assigned as homework):** Distribute a copy of [Survivors of Rwanda Genocide, Nazi Holocaust Find Common Ground](#) to each student. Ask students to read the article and write in their journals a 5–8 paragraph response to the following questions:

Ms. Murekatete says in the article, “The United Nations and other world leaders always say, ‘never again, never again,’ but so far it has continued to happen and it is up to each and every one of us to make sure that that phrase ‘never again’ is not just an empty phrase but a reality...”

- a. What are some ways that Mr. Gewirtzman suggests that each and every one of us can make sure that the phrase ‘never again’ is not just an empty phrase?
- b. Are there other ways that are not already mentioned by Mr. Gewirtzman?

### Part III (40 minutes)

1. Brainstorm the following questions with students:
  - Does each and every one of us have a responsibility to respond to the situation in Darfur?
  - What are some ways we could respond?
  - Do you know of someone involved in a student project, or other forms of action to aid the victims in Darfur? If so, what action have they taken?
2. Inform students that they are going to have an opportunity to take action to aid Darfur. Distribute the [Darfur: Student Action](#) handout to each student.
3. Divide students into groups of 4–5. Ask for each group to review the various forms of action taken by students across the world, and to add any other ideas for ways to take action on Darfur in their school and/or community.
4. Inform each group that they should choose one project from the list to implement in their school and/or community. Ask each group to come to a consensus on which project they would like to implement.
5. Inform students that once their group has chosen their project, they will need to build an action plan that reflects
  - the specific goal of their group project to aid Darfur,
  - specific action steps they will take to achieve their project goal, and
  - a timeline that reflects when and where they will complete the action steps they have outlined.
6. Teachers should review the action plan of each group to ensure that each of the three questions listed above have been completed satisfactorily. Once each group’s action plan has been approved by the teacher, students may begin implementation of their project or campaign.
7. After students have had time to successfully complete their projects, ask each student to write a reflective essay on
  - a. the successes of their project or campaign,
  - b. challenges that may have arisen, and
  - c. their individual impression of the impact of their group project or campaign on their school and/or community.
8. Encourage students to continue their aid for Darfur by implementing an additional project listed on the [Darfur: Student Action](#) handout. For each additional project that students pursue, they should repeat Steps 5–7 in this part of the lesson to ensure students meet and reflect on their project goals.

### Extension Activities

- Have students discuss their positions on different forms of justice for human rights abusers and perpetrators of genocide (Nuremberg trials, International Criminal Court, truth & reconciliation, international tribunals, and so forth), and debate which form of justice should be implemented for perpetrators of genocide in Darfur, Sudan.
- Have students read novels that offer first-hand accounts about the conflict in Darfur, such as [Emma's War](#) (Author: Deborah Scroggins, ISBN: 0375703772), [God Grew Tired of Us: A Memoir](#) (Authors: John Bul Dau and Michael S. Sweeney,

ISBN: 978-1426202124), [War Child: A Soldier's Story](#) (Author: Emmanuel Jal, ISBN: 978-0312602970) or [Six Months in Sudan](#) (Author: Dr. James Maskalyk, ISBN: 978-0385526517).

## Peter Biro: A Journalist's Diary



*May 8–16, 2004 Violent conflict has been raging in Sudan's Darfur region. Peter Biro, a 37-year-old Swede who works for the International Rescue Committee, was sent to Chad's northeastern border with Sudan to join the humanitarian organization's emergency response efforts to aid thousands of Sudanese refugees seeking safety.*

*Submitted from BAHAI, Chad* – “More than 20,000 refugees have fled to Bahai and the nearby village of Cariari, a stone's-throw from the border with Sudan, and my colleagues estimate that 200 to 300 more are arriving every week. The influx has tripled the population of this remote place, stretching the resources of the already impoverished communities....

“I wake in the morning to a gust of wind, which brings with it the stench of hundreds if not thousands of decomposing donkeys, camels and goats. The putrid smell is everywhere, I soon learned; when the wind blows, it only gets worse.

“The refugees, most of them from families that have long been animal herders, all came here with their livestock. But now the animals are dying from hunger, thirst and exhaustion at an alarming rate. I spend the coming days with our carcass disposal team. Their rather unpleasant job is to prevent the outbreak of disease by collecting as many dead animals as possible, transporting them to a place in the desert away from any settlements and torching them...

“So at 7 a.m., with the merciless desert sun already beating down on us, we bring the creatures to a designated spot, and with the flick of a match, hundreds of dead animals, once the livelihood, sustenance and means of transportation for their former owners, explode in a sea of flames. Thankfully, we are wearing masks...

“Forty percent of the children coming to the International Rescue Committee's clinics are malnourished and there has been an alarming increase in diarrhea and dysentery. It's May 12 and Camilo [Dr. Camilo Valderrama] is attending to Hadiya Beshir Issa, 25, and her 15-month-old daughter Munira at an IRC [International Rescue Committee] health facility in Bahai. They are recent arrivals in a seemingly endless stream of refugees fleeing brutal attacks in Darfur, Sudan.

“Munira hardly has the strength to open her eyes and her skin is shriveled from dehydration. Camilo says the tiny girl is severely malnourished and he instructs Hadiya how to administer oral re-hydration solution and antibiotics.

“Hadiya is from a village near Kutum in northern Darfur, where the IRC is also providing humanitarian aid. She told me that a militia attacked her village last August and that her family fled to the town of Orshi, on the way to Chad.

“But that town was ransacked by gunmen last month and in the chaos, Hadiya became separated from her husband and the rest of her family. She told me that she has no idea if they are still alive. After an eight-day trek, she crossed into Chad with her baby, arriving in Bahai with 17 other families.

“As Hadiya recounted her story, Camilo continued to treat Munira. But in the next couple of hours, the little girl's condition rapidly deteriorated. We quickly took her to the hospital in Tine, two hours away, but doctors there couldn't even find the child's veins in order to administer intravenous liquid. She was beyond help...

“On Sunday, May 16, I drive to Cariari, an hour north of Bahai by car, where the IRC is working to dig wells and revive existing ones, amid severe shortages of clean water. Cariari, in spite of its forbidding landscape, is currently home to thousands of refugees who have to walk six hours in either direction to find drinking water...

“In the middle of this dry wasteland, I find my colleague Abdel Majid and his team of well-diggers...

“Sure enough, it took five men two days to dig one cubic meter (this is no easy task in sand). They had struck water just as I had arrived. It was cause for celebration...

“They invite me to share a meal under a makeshift shelter. On a charcoal bed in the sand the men have cooked a porridge made up of sorghum, a type of millet, and a thick sauce from tomato powder and nut oil. It’s surprisingly tasty...

“Dots of light fill the plain as thousands of refugees start fires for the night. I strike up a conversation with a group of people nearby who are seated around a flickering fire. They are part of a community of 300 people that crossed into Chad the previous day. They had come from the Sudanese village of Amburu, some 150 kilometres inside Darfur. It was attacked two weeks earlier, they said, by the government-backed Janjaweed militia.

“One man, who said his name was Muhammed Haroun, said heavily armed men riding camels and horses rode into the village and began shooting in all directions at the well. He said the Janjaweed killed villagers execution-style and raped several women. They all said their livestock was stolen.

“Next to him sat Hadiya Adem. She is in her forties and has a gunshot wound on her right foot, wrapped in dirty gauze. Hadiya told me that she and a girl from the village went to the well at night to get some water a few days before the big attack and was startled and frightened when they were confronted there by men from the Sudanese Army. The men seized the girl and shot Hadiya in the foot when she tried to stop them...And in spite of the thousands of people surrounding us, huddled around fires to keep warm in the chilly night air, you could have heard a needle drop.”



Excerpted and reprinted with permission from Peter Biro, “[Painful cost of Sudan relief effort](#),” CNN.com, July 22, 2004.

# Darfur: The Facts

The following information covers the events in Darfur through February 2020. Students should conduct further research using the [Darfur: Internet Links & Sources](#) handout in order to obtain the most current information concerning the situation in Darfur.

## Displacement

Since 2003, ethnic populations of Darfur (Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa), have been consistently attacked by Arab militias (*Janjaweed*), enlisted by the Arab-ruled Sudanese government to burn villages and homes, massacre civilians and children, torture inhabitants and rape both women and girls in an effort to “ethnically cleanse” Sudan of its ethnic population. Both the *Janjaweed* and the ethnic groups targeted are African Muslim, but the Arab militias have destroyed mosques and killed Muslim leaders in order to intimidate and destroy all aspects of the lives of ethnic peoples in Darfur.<sup>1</sup>

The conflict between the ethnic and Arab groups dates back to the 1950s, but violence escalated in February 2003 when two ethnic rebel groups (the Sudan Liberation Army and the Justice Equality Movement) sought to equalize power and economic access for ethnic people in Sudan—the largest country in Africa with a total population, at the time, of approximately 39 million, of which 52% are ethnic, and 39% are Arab. In an effort to suppress the actions of these two rebel groups, the Sudanese government waged a campaign of terror and violence specifically targeting civilian communities in the region of Darfur, leaving thousands murdered, and village after village decimated.<sup>2</sup>

Since February 2003, some 300,000 people are estimated to have died in Darfur, and approximately 2.7 million people have been displaced, including some 450,000 persons in 2014 and another 100,000 in January 2015 alone.<sup>3</sup>

## Devastation & Destruction

Since 2003, thousands of civilians in the Darfur region have been killed or “disappeared” (kidnapped or stolen), millions have fled to refugee and internally displaced persons camps, land and villages have been ruined, and all sources of supplies, food and water have been pillaged or destroyed. Women and girls are highly at risk and have been systematically raped, attacked, beheaded or enslaved by the *Janjaweed* patrols (government militias).<sup>4</sup>

Most of the refugees and displaced persons from Darfur have lost whatever livestock or belongings they may have had before the government air strikes and the mass looting of the government-backed *Janjaweed*. Many have not survived the hundreds of miles it takes to reach a refugee or displaced persons camp.<sup>5</sup>

The Committee on Conscience of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum declared a “genocide emergency” in Sudan, indicating their warning was based on the following government actions<sup>6</sup>:

- A divide-to-destroy strategy of pitting ethnic groups against each other, with enormous loss of civilian life.
- The use of mass starvation as a weapon of destruction.
- Toleration of the enslavement of women and children by government-allied militias.
- The incessant bombing of hospitals, clinics, schools and other civilian and humanitarian targets.
- Disruption and destabilization of the communities of those who flee the war zones to other parts of Sudan.
- Widespread persecution on account of race, ethnicity and religion.

## Delivery of Aide

Massive aide efforts began in 2004 by agencies such as UNICEF, Doctors Without Borders and USAID to provide food, water and medical supplies to the scattered camps located in Darfur and neighboring Chad. Their efforts succeeded in preventing massive deaths in 2005.<sup>7</sup> By late 2005, humanitarian agencies were unable to access many affected areas due to violence and increasing obstruction by Sudanese government policies and practices. The government used these tactics to wage a starvation campaign. They restricted aid only to the areas they controlled, refusing aid to civilians in rebel-held areas.<sup>8</sup> There is still severe malnutrition, poor sanitation, poor healthcare and a lack of shelter in the camps. In addition, the Sudanese government limited media and national press reports on the situation in Darfur to block information to the outside world community.<sup>9</sup>

Children in particular fall prey to high rates of famine and disease in the camps. In the wake of the war, a resurgence of diseases like polio, which was completely eradicated in Sudan in 2001, infected more than 10,000 Sudanese according to health professional estimates.<sup>10</sup>

As stated by representatives of USAID, “USAID has put over one billion dollars in humanitarian assistance into Sudan since 1989...On May 3, 2001, President Bush appointed USAID Administrator, Andrew Natsios, as the U.S. Special Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan. His main agenda has been greater humanitarian access for all of Sudan. In September, former Senator Danforth was appointed the U.S. Special Envoy for Peace to Sudan. In the initial phase of U.S. engagement under the Special Envoy, the humanitarian and political agendas have intertwined. The success of these efforts led to negotiations between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement on a comprehensive framework agreement for peace. It has also added to increased stability with international monitoring.”<sup>11</sup>

## Latest Developments

On September 9, 2004, United States Secretary of State Colin Powell declared the atrocities in Darfur a “genocide.” However, the international community had not applied maximum pressure on the Sudanese government to end acts of violence against civilian populations in Darfur.

A comprehensive peace agreement (CPA) was signed on January 9, 2005 in Nairobi between the Sudanese government and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) to end the North/South conflict, one of the world’s bloodiest. The agreement included a permanent cease fire, yet neither side agreed to disband their militias. Sudan President Omar Hassan al-Bashir was accused of organizing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur. He emphatically denied the Sudanese government had any involvement in the genocide or connection to the *Janjaweed*.<sup>12</sup>

In 2009, President al-Bashir was charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Darfur between 2003 and 2009. These crimes included acts of murder, extermination, torture, rape and more. A warrant for al-Bashir’s arrest was made by the International Criminal Court (ICC) on March 4, 2009.<sup>13</sup> Against opposition and despite the warrants, President al-Bashir won two consecutive elections in 2010 and 2015. In the meantime, on July 9, 2011, South Sudan gained its independence following a January referendum in which 98.8% of voters chose to separate from Sudan.<sup>14</sup> Africa’s largest country was now split in two.

Conflict continued in Darfur leading to a high number of casualties and many more persons being displaced from their homes. Political unrest increased. In response to the announcement of price hikes for fuel and bread, protests began in December 2018 nationwide. After months of protest, President al-Bashir was forced from office in April 2019, ending his 30-year reign over Sudan. A Sovereignty Council, a joint civilian-military-executive body, holds power as of November 2019.<sup>15</sup>

On December 14, 2019, Mr. al-Bashir was sentenced to two years in detention for corruption, possessing foreign currency and receiving illegal gifts. He was also charged in relation to the deaths of protesters during the demonstrations that led up to him being ousted. It is yet to be seen if Mr. al-Bashir will be extradited on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Darfur.<sup>16</sup>

While fighting has lessened in Darfur, more than one million remain displaced and 3.1 million remain in need of humanitarian aid.<sup>17</sup>

## Questions we still have?

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## Darfur: Internet Links & Sources

Use the following internet links to research the most recent events and news occurring in Darfur. For some resources, you may need to search the term “Darfur.”

Enough Project	<a href="https://enoughproject.org">https://enoughproject.org</a>
The Guardian	<a href="http://www.theguardian.com">www.theguardian.com</a>
Human Rights Watch	<a href="http://www.hrw.org">www.hrw.org</a>
International Crisis Group	<a href="http://www.crisisgroup.org">www.crisisgroup.org</a>
Jewish World Watch	<a href="http://www.jww.org">www.jww.org</a>
The New York Times	<a href="http://www.nytimes.com">www.nytimes.com</a>
Security Council Report	<a href="http://www.securitycouncilreport.org">www.securitycouncilreport.org</a>
UN News	<a href="https://news.un.org/en">https://news.un.org/en</a>
United to End Genocide	<a href="http://endgenocide.org">http://endgenocide.org</a>
USA Today	<a href="http://www.usatoday.com">www.usatoday.com</a>
USAID	<a href="http://www.usaid.gov">www.usaid.gov</a>

# Survivors of Rwanda Genocide, Nazi Holocaust Find Common Ground

By Jenny Falcon, February 18, 2004



Their stories of survival are terrifying. But a young survivor of the 1994 Rwanda genocide and a Nazi Holocaust survivor are determined to tell youngsters about their painful past in the hopes of preventing such atrocities from happening again. In the process, the two have forged an unlikely friendship based on a bond of suffering.

For years, David Gewirtzman has talked to local students and community groups about his experience as a Jew in Nazi-occupied Poland.



A teenager at the time, Mr. Gewirtzman and his family barely escaped death. They survived after his father paid a Polish farmer to hide eight Jews in a small, filthy hole under a pigsty. They huddled there for close to three years.

"We came out of what we called the grave into one large cemetery," recalled Mr. Gewirtzman. "A cemetery in which six million Jews and five million non-Jews were massacred and buried all over Europe. In the town, my town, out of the 8,000 Jewish people who lived in the ghetto, 16 came back alive."

Mr. Gewirtzman, 75, often receives letters from students he addresses. But two years ago, the retired New York pharmacist received one that touched him deeply. It was from then-16-year-old

Jacqueline Murekatete, who had survived the 1994 massacres of minority Tutsis in Rwanda by the majority Hutus. She lost her parents, six siblings and scores of relatives.

Ms. Murekatete wrote: "Maybe I can make a difference in this world, if I try. And maybe I can do my part to make sure that no other human being goes through the same experience I did." Ms. Murekatete thanked Mr. Gewirtzman for sharing his story.

"I saw so many similarities, how he was going to school one day - a child, like myself - then he was dehumanized, called an enemy of the country, having to see people killed and losing relatives," she said. "I felt a bond and I felt that he understood me and that is how the friendship started."

Mr. Gewirtzman wrote back to Ms. Murekatete and they soon began working together.

They approach an auditorium of teenagers who are chewing gum and chatting happily with their friends. But it does not take long for the students to listen quietly.

"We would see people with torches and machetes and they would come towards the county [village] and every night our neighbors, our former Hutu neighbors, started following us and every night they came and killed people," she told the youngsters.

Ms. Murekatete describes her nightmare in detail. She was nine years old and was staying with her grandmother when machete- and gun-wielding Hutu mobs arrived at her parents' village. Ms. Murekatete eventually found refuge in an orphanage, but her grandmother was murdered.

After the killings, which left an estimated 800,000 people dead in 100 days, Ms. Murekatete learned that nearly all of her relatives had been butchered to death and were thrown in the river. "I did not understand, being nine years old," she said, "why they had died, why hundreds of thousands of Tutsis had been killed for no reason other than the fact that they were Tutsis."

She asked how the international community allows genocides to continue, from Cambodia to Rwanda, despite the post-Holocaust pledge to prevent any more mass killings?

"The United Nations and other world leaders always say, 'never again, never again,' but so far it has continued to happen and it is up to each and every one of us to make sure that that phrase 'never again' is not just an empty phrase but a reality," said Ms. Murekatete.

Mr. Gewirtzman says selfish motives compel him to keep speaking - he wants to make the world a better place for his six grandchildren. He says if he can influence one person to stick up for someone in need of help, then he has succeeded.

"When you see a bully in the corridor of your school beating up on somebody and that somebody is not a friend of yours, is not a relative of yours, instead of going away and saying, 'I do not want to get mixed up with that, you do something about it' because if you do not, neither your children nor my children will ever be safe," said Mr. Gewirtzman.



VOA photo | J. Falcon

Students giving David Gewirtzman and Jacqueline Murekatete a standing ovation.

The students, some of them stunned and teary-eyed, ask the survivors questions about their escapes. "Before the genocide," asks one, "did you have friends of other religions or ethnic groups and if so how did the genocide impact those relationships?"

While most of the students go on to their next class, several stay behind to talk to Jacqueline Murekatete.

Another student says, "It's upsetting that the world has let something like this occur and it helps you to think about what you can do about it."

During her talk, Ms. Murekatete begins to cry when describing the day she found out that her parents had been murdered.

David Gewirtzman says from the beginning, the two survivors understood each others' tears. "It did not matter whether she was from Africa, Asia, Europe, Jewish, Christian, it did not matter," he said. "All of a sudden, there was a blood bond between us. It was our pain that united us. I felt, my God, is that what it takes in order for her and me to unite. Can we not do it without going through the horror that we went through? She really is my sister. As close as other people are to me, as close as neighbors and friends are, they do not understand me the way she does."

Ms. Murekatete was adopted by an uncle in the United States, but Mr. Gewirtzman and his wife have taken on a role of grandparents. They invite her to their home for dinner and call to see how she is doing in school. Now a college student in New York, Ms. Murekatete is writing a book about her experience.



VOA photo | J. Falcon

David Gewirtzman, his wife, Lillian at a restaurant.

Reprinted from Voices of America, [www.voanews.com/a/a-13-a-2004-02-18-26-survivors-67488242/386604.html](http://www.voanews.com/a/a-13-a-2004-02-18-26-survivors-67488242/386604.html).

# Darfur: Student Action

The following are suggested forms of action taken by students across the world in an effort to aid the victims of genocide in Darfur.

- ➔ **Organize a table or host an event to bring awareness of coalitions.** The Save Darfur Coalition was an alliance of over 100 faith-based, humanitarian and human rights organizations whose mission was to raise public awareness and to mobilize an effective unified response to the atrocities that threaten the lives of two million people in the Darfur region. Building upon the legacy of this coalition is United to End Genocide. Go to <http://endgenocide.org/take-action/> for information on how you can show a film, hold an event, talk to policymakers or get the media to raise awareness about the crisis and violence in Darfur.
- ➔ **Put together a photo exhibit** featuring pictures from Darfur. Photos should include captions, which is often very helpful for educating others.
- ➔ **Invite humanitarian experts** who are working in Sudan to present at community centers, places of worship or civic institutions.
- ➔ **Meet with members of Congress** as a delegation to discuss the urgency needed for the US to help stop the violence in Darfur. Meet in congressional offices in Washington, D.C., or at local district offices.
- ➔ **Advertise in your school or community newspaper or write an Op Ed piece** to raise awareness about Darfur in your school and community.
- ➔ **Push your local community council to pass a proclamation** condemning the atrocities in Darfur and calling upon the US and UN to take further effective actions.
- ➔ **Write letters** to the U.S. President, your Congressional Representatives and your Senators to take action on Darfur.

## Sample Letter to President:

*President [Name of President]*

*The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500*

*Dear President [Last Name of President]:*

*I am deeply concerned about the tragic events in Darfur. We have watched with growing anxiety and dismay as our government failed to respond adequately to what was described as the worst humanitarian crisis in the world. Then, after the Congress, the Senate and the President identified these atrocities as genocide, we failed to stop them.*

- *I call on you with great urgency to take whatever measures are necessary to stop the violence. I call on you to use our tremendous power and moral authority to create safety for the innocent men, women, and children, and to provide:*
- *Security – an immediate end by the Sudanese government of to the violence and the manipulative practices by which it is affecting the genocide*
- *Accountability – holding the Sudanese government officials and proxy forces responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity accountable for their crimes.*
- *Humanitarian Relief – sufficient aid to meet the basic needs of refugees and the displaced;*
- *Safe Return – establishment of conditions that allow the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of individuals to their homes and villages.*

*You lead the most powerful nation in history. Your constituents want you to end the genocide and create the conditions for peace in Darfur.*

*Please take action today, and tomorrow, and the tomorrow after that, if necessary, to meet our shared moral obligation.*

*Sincerely,*

*[Your Name]*

*[Your Address]*

*[City, State Zip]*