Ten stages of genocide

https://www.genocidewatch.com/ten-stages-of-genocide

Genocide is a process that develops in ten stages that are predictable but not inexorable. At each stage, preventive measures can stop it.
The process is not linear. Stages may occur simultaneously. **Each stage is itself a process.** Logically, later stages are preceded by earlier stages. But all stages continue to operate throughout the process.

I. CLASSIFICATION

All cultures have categories to distinguish people into "us and them" by ethnicity, race, religion, or nationality: German and Jew, Hutu and Tutsi. Bipolar societies that lack mixed categories, such as Rwanda and Burundi, are the most likely to have genocide. One of most important classifications in the current nation-state system is citizenship in a nationality. Removal or denial of a group's citizenship is a legal way to deny the group's civil and human rights. The first step toward the genocide of Jews and Roma in Nazi Germany were the laws to strip them of their German citizenship. Burma's 1982 citizenship law classified Rohingyas out of national citizenship. In India, the Citizenship Act denies a route to citizenship for Muslim refugees. Native Americans were not granted citizenship in the USA until 1924, after centuries of genocide that decimated their populations.

The main preventive measure at this early stage is to develop universalistic institutions that transcend ethnic or racial divisions, that actively promote tolerance and understanding, and that promote classifications that transcend the divisions. The Catholic church could have played this role in Rwanda, had it not been riven by the same ethnic cleavages as Rwandan society. Promotion of a common language in countries like Tanzania has also promoted transcendent national identity. Laws that provide routes for citizenship to immigrants and refugees break down barriers to civil rights. This search for common ground is vital to early prevention of genocide.

II. SYMBOLIZATION

We give names or other symbols to the classifications. We name people "Jews" or "Gypsies", or distinguish them by colors or dress; and apply the symbols to members of groups. Classification and symbolization are universally human and do not necessarily result in genocide unless they lead to dehumanization. When combined with hatred, symbols may be forced upon unwilling members of pariah groups: the yellow star for Jews under Nazi rule, the blue scarf for people from the Eastern Zone in Khmer Rouge Cambodia.

To combat symbolization, hate symbols can be legally forbidden (swastikas) as can hate speech. Group marking like gang clothing or tribal scarring can be outlawed, as well. The problem is that legal limitations will fail if unsupported by popular cultural enforcement. Though Hutu and Tutsi were forbidden words in Burundi until the 1980's, code words replaced them. If widely supported, however, denial of symbolization can be powerful, as it was in Bulgaria, where the government refused to supply enough yellow badges and at

least eighty percent of Jews did not wear them, depriving the yellow star of its significance as a Nazi symbol for Jews.

III. DISCRIMINATION

A dominant group uses law, custom, and political power to deny the rights of other groups. The powerless group may not be accorded full civil rights, voting rights, or even citizenship. The dominant group is driven by an exclusionary ideology that would deprive less powerful groups of their rights. The ideology advocates monopolization or expansion of power by the dominant group. It legitimizes the victimization of weaker groups. Advocates of exclusionary ideologies are often charismatic, expressing the resentments of their followers. Examples include the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 in Nazi Germany, which stripped Jews of their German citizenship, and prohibited their employment by the government and by universities. Discrimination against native Americans and African-Americans was enshrined in the US Constitution until the post Civil War Amendments and mid-20th century laws to enforce them. Denial of citizenship to the Rohingya Muslim minority in Myanmar led to genocide in 2017 and the displacement of over a million refugees.

Prevention against discrimination means full political empowerment and citizenship rights for all groups in a society. Discrimination on the basis of nationality, ethnicity, race or religion should be outlawed. Individuals should have the right to sue the state, corporations, and other individuals if their rights are violated.

IV. DEHUMANIZATION

One group denies the humanity of the other group. Members of it are equated with animals, vermin, insects or diseases. Dehumanization overcomes the normal human revulsion against murder. At this stage, hate propaganda in print, on hate radios, and in social media is used to vilify the victim group. It may even be incorporated into school textbooks. Indoctrination prepares the way for incitement. The majority group is taught to regard the other group as less than human, and even alien to their society. They are indoctrinated to believe that " We are better off without them." The powerless group can become so depersonalized that they are actually given numbers rather than names, as Jews were in the death camps. They are equated with filth, impurity, and immorality. Hate speech fills the propaganda of official radio, newspapers, and speeches.

To combat dehumanization, incitement to genocide should not be confused with protected speech. Genocidal societies lack constitutional protection for countervailing speech, and should be treated differently than democracies. Local and international leaders should condemn the use of hate speech and make it culturally unacceptable. Leaders who incite genocide should be prosecuted in national courts. They should be banned from international travel and have their foreign finances frozen. Hate radio stations should be jammed or shut down, and hate propaganda and its sources banned from social media and the internet. Hate crimes and atrocities should be promptly punished.

V. ORGANIZATION

Genocide is always organized, usually by the state, often using militias to provide deniability of state responsibility (the Janjaweed in Darfur.) Sometimes organization is informal (Hindu mobs led by local RSS militants) or decentralized (terrorist groups.) Special army units or militias are often trained and armed. Plans are made for genocidal killings. Genocide

often occurs during civil or international wars. Arms flows to states and militias (even in violation of UN Arms Embargoes) facilitate acts of genocide. States organize secret police to spy on, arrest, torture, and murder people suspected of opposition to political leaders. Motivations for targeting a group are indoctrinated through mass media and special training for murderous militias, death squads, and special army killing units like the Nazi Einsaztgruppen, which murdered 1.5 million Jews in Eastern Europe .

To combat organization, membership in genocidal militias should be outlawed. Their leaders should be denied visas for foreign travel and their foreign assets frozen. The UN should impose arms embargoes on governments and citizens of countries involved in genocidal massacres, and create commissions to investigate violations, as was done in post-genocide Rwanda. National legal systems should prosecute and disarm groups that plan and commit hate crimes.

VI. POLARIZATION

Extremists drive the groups apart. Hate groups broadcast polarizing propaganda. Laws may forbid intermarriage or social interaction. Extremist terrorism targets moderates, intimidating and silencing the center. Moderates from the perpetrators' own group are most able to stop genocide, so are the first to be arrested and killed. Leaders in targeted groups are the next to be arrested and murdered. The dominant group passes emergency laws or decrees that grants them total power over the targeted group. The laws erode fundamental civil rights and liberties. Targeted groups are disarmed to make them incapable of self-defense, and to ensure that the dominant group has total control.

Prevention may mean security protection for moderate leaders or assistance to human rights groups. Assets of extremists should be seized, and visas for international travel denied to them. Coups d'état by extremists should be opposed by international sanctions and regional isolation of extremist leaders. Vigorous objections should be raised to arrests of members of opposition groups. If necessary, targeted groups should be armed to defend themselves. National government leaders should denounce polarizing hate speech. Educators should teach tolerance.

VII. PREPARATION

National or perpetrator group leaders plan the "Final Solution" to the Jewish, Armenian, Tutsi or other targeted group "question." They often use euphemisms to cloak their intentions, such as referring to their goals as "ethnic cleansing," "purification," or "counter-terrorism." They build armies, buy weapons and train their troops and militias. They indoctrinate the populace with fear of the victim group. Leaders often claim that "if we don't kill them, they will kill us," disguising genocide as self-defense. There is a sudden increase in inflammatory rhetoric and hate propaganda with the objective of creating fear of the other group. Political processes such as peace accords that threaten the dominance of the ruling group through elections or prosecution for corruption may actually trigger genocide.

Prevention of preparation may include arms embargoes and commissions to enforce them. It should include prosecution of incitement and conspiracy to commit genocide, both crimes under Article 3 of the Genocide Convention.
National law enforcement authorities should arrest and prosecute leaders of groups planning genocidal massacres.

VIII. PERSECUTION

Victims are identified and separated out because of their national, ethnic, racial or religious identity. The victim group's most basic human rights are systematically violated through extrajudicial killings, torture and forced displacement. Death lists are drawn up. In state sponsored genocide, members of victim groups may be forced to wear identifying symbols. Their property is often expropriated. Sometimes they are segregated into ghettoes, deported to concentration camps, or confined to a famine-struck region and starved. They are deliberately deprived of resources such as water or food in order to slowly destroy the group. Programs are implemented to prevent procreation through forced sterilization or abortions. Children are forcibly taken from their parents. Genocidal massacres begin. **All of these destructive acts are acts of genocide outlawed by the Genocide Convention. They are acts of genocide because they intentionally destroy part of a group.** The perpetrators watch for whether such massacres are opposed by any effective international response. If there is no reaction, they realize they can get away with genocide. The perpetrators know that the U.N., regional organizations, and nations with powerful militaries will again be bystanders and permit another genocide.

At this stage, a Genocide Emergency must be declared. If the political will of the great powers, regional alliances, or U.N. Security Council or the U.N. General Assembly can be mobilized, vigorous diplomacy, targeted economic sanctions, and even armed international intervention should be prepared. Assistance should be provided to the victim group to prepare for its self-defense. Humanitarian assistance should be organized by the U.N. and private relief groups for the inevitable tide of refugees to come.

IX. EXTERMINATION

Extermination begins, and quickly becomes the mass killing legally called "genocide." It is "extermination" to the killers because they do not believe their victims to be fully human. When it is sponsored by the state, the armed forces often work with militias to do the killing. The goal of total genocides is to kill all the members of the targeted group. But most genocides are genocides "in part." All educated members of the targeted group might be murdered (Burundi 1972). All men and boys of fighting age may be murdered (Srebrenica, Bosnia 1995). All women and girls may be raped (Darfur, Myanmar.) Mass rapes of women have become a characteristic of all modern genocides. Rape is used as a means to genetically alter and destroy the victim group. Sometimes the genocide results in revenge killings by groups against each other, creating the downward whirlpool-like cycle of bilateral genocide (as in Burundi). Destruction of cultural and religious property is employed to annihilate the group's existence from history (Armenia 1915 - 1922, Da'esh/ISIS 2014 - 2018).

"Total war" between nations or ethnic groups is inherently genocidal because it does not differentiate civilians from non-combatants. "Carpet" bombing, firebombing, bombing hospitals, and use of chemical or biological weapons are war crimes and also acts of genocide. Terrorism does not differentiate civilians and combatants, and when intended to destroy members of a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group is genocidal. Use of nuclear weapons is the ultimate act of genocide because it is consciously intended to destroy a substantial part of a national group.

During active genocide, only rapid and overwhelming armed intervention can stop genocide. Real safe areas or refugee escape corridors should be established with heavily armed international protection. (An unsafe “safe” area is worse than none at all.) For armed interventions, a multilateral force authorized by the U.N. should intervene if politically possible. The Standing High Readiness Brigade, EU Rapid Response Force, or regional forces (NATO, ASEAN, ECOWAS) — should be authorized to act by the U.N. Security Council. The UN General Assembly may authorize action under the Uniting for Peace Resolution G A Res. 330 (1950), which has been used 13 times for such armed intervention. If the U.N. is paralyzed, regional alliances must act under Chapter VIII of the U.N. Charter. The international responsibility to protect transcends the narrow interests of individual nation states. If strong nations will not provide troops to intervene directly, they should provide the airlift, equipment, and financial means necessary for regional states to intervene.

X. DENIAL

Denial is the final stage that lasts throughout and always follows genocide. It is among the surest indicators of further genocidal massacres. The perpetrators of genocide dig up the mass graves, burn the bodies, try to cover up the evidence and intimidate the witnesses. They deny that they committed any crimes, and often blame what happened on the victims. Acts of genocide are disguised as counter-insurgency if there is an ongoing armed conflict or civil war. Perpetrators block investigations of the crimes, and continue to govern until driven from power by force, when they flee into exile. There they remain with impunity, like Pol Pot or Idi Amin, unless they are captured and a tribunal is established to try them.

During and after genocide, lawyers, diplomats, and others who oppose forceful action often deny that these crimes meet the definition of genocide. They call them euphemisms like "ethnic cleansing" instead. They question whether intent to destroy a group can be proven, ignoring thousands of murders. They overlook deliberate imposition of conditions that destroy part of a group. They claim that only courts can determine whether there has been genocide, demanding "proof beyond a reasonable doubt", when prevention only requires action based on compelling evidence.

The best response to denial is punishment by an international tribunal or national courts. There the evidence can be heard, and the perpetrators punished. Tribunals like the Yugoslav, Rwanda or Sierra Leone Tribunals, the tribunal to try the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, or the International Criminal Court may not deter the worst genocidal killers. But with the political will to arrest and prosecute them, some may be brought to justice. Local justice and truth commissions and public school education are also antidotes to denial. They may open ways to reconciliation and preventive education.

This processual model demonstrates that there is a logic to the genocidal process, though it does not proceed in a linear order. By helping us understand the logic of genocide, people can see the early warning signs of genocide and know when it is coming. Leaders can design policies to counteract the forces that drive each of the stages.

This stage model of the genocidal process was first set forth in 1987 in the Faulds Lecture at Warren Wilson College, "Blue Scarves and Yellow Stars: Classification and Symbolization in the Cambodian Genocide." The model was presented as a briefing paper, "The Eight Stages of Genocide" at the US State Department in 1996. Discrimination and Persecution have been added to the 1996 model.

I am grateful to many people for improvements in my original eight stage model, in particular to Prof. Alan Whitehorn of the Royal Military College of Canada, and Prof. Elisa von Joeden-Forgey for noting the gendered aspects of genocides.

No model is ever perfect. All are merely ideal-typical representations of reality that are meant to help us think more clearly about social and cultural processes. It is important not to confuse any stage with a status. Each stage is a process. It is like a fluctuating point on a thermometer that rises and falls as the social temperature in a potential area of conflict rises and falls. **It is crucial not to confuse this model with a linear one. In all genocides, many stages occur simultaneously.**

The purpose of this model is to place the risk factors in Barbara Harff's pioneering analysis of country risks of genocide and politicide into a processual structure. Risks of political instability are characteristic of what Kuper called "divided societies," with deep rifts in Classification. Targeted groups of state-led discrimination are victims of Discrimination. An exclusionary ideology is central to Discrimination and Dehumanization. Autocratic regimes foster the Organization of hate groups. An ethnically polarized elite is characteristic of Polarization. Lack of openness to trade and other influences from outside a state's borders is characteristic of Preparation for genocide or politicide. Massive violation of human rights is evidence of Persecution. Impunity after previous genocides or politicides is evidence of Denial.

This model aims to describe the processes that lead to genocide and actions to oppose those processes. It goes beyond statistical risk factors to describe events that signal warnings of genocidal processes. It is a model to guide policy makers to take actions to prevent and stop genocide. It has been successfully applied by policy makers to prevent or stop genocides in Mozambique, East Timor, Kosovo, Macedonia, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Burundi, Ethiopia, and Kenya. However, when national or world leaders lack the political will to prevent genocide, thousands of people die.

Ultimately the best antidote to genocide is popular education and the development of social and cultural tolerance for diversity. That is why Genocide Watch and the Alliance Against Genocide hope to educate people around the world to resist genocidal forces whenever they see them.

Finally the movement that will end genocide must come not from international armed interventions, but rather from popular resistance to every form of discrimination; dehumanization, hate speech, and formation of hate groups; rise of political parties that preach hatred, racism or xenophobia; rule by polarizing elites that advocate exclusionary ideologies; police states that massively violate human rights; closure of borders to international trade or communications; and denial of past genocides or crimes against humanity against victim groups.

The movement that will end genocide in this century must arise from each of us who have the courage to challenge discrimination, hatred, and tyranny. We must never let the wreckage of humanity's barbaric past keep us from envisioning a peaceful future when law and democratic freedom will rule the earth.

For those who doubt there is any direction in history, our common humanity is enough to give meaning to our cause. To those of us who know that history is not some directionless accident, this is our calling and our destiny. John F. Kennedy said, “On earth, God’s work must truly be our own.”

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