

Propositions for educational activities

exercise

Read the capsule articles about the Yazidis, the Rohingya people, and the Srebrenica Massacre. What were the effects of these events for their respective groups? What are the problems, actual and potential, faced by members of groups that have been targeted with genocide? How can the communities afflicted by such tragedies attempt to cope with their effects?



The Convention obligates its signatory states to punish not only the crime of genocide. With reference to the text of the Convention, indicate what other acts are subject to punishment (e.g. incitement to genocide, attempted genocide). Consider how such practices can be counteracted or prevented.



Text of the Convention

The Rohingya people

A Muslim minority in Myanmar (previously known as Burma). Although they had been oppressed for decades (being denied citizenship, discriminated against, and falling victim to acts of violence), in 2016 the scale and brutality of persecution forced them to seek shelter in neighboring countries, mainly in Bangladesh, to which – according to data from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs – some 900,000 fled. In 2019, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court launched an investigation into the crimes committed on the territories of Bangladesh and Myanmar. Furthermore, in the same year Gambia commenced proceedings against Myanmar, stating that from October 2015 the Myanmar army and security forces had conducted wide-scale and systematic “clearance operations,” the objective of which was the destruction of the Rohingya people as a group, in part or in whole, accompanied by rapes and other forms of sexual violence, and also by the systematic burning of villages – frequently with the residents trapped in their homes.

Srebrenica

in July 1995, during the civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992–1995), more than 8,000 Muslim men and boys were murdered by Serbian units in the vicinity of Srebrenica, an enclave that had been declared a United Nations “safe area.” It was protected by Dutch soldiers of the UN peace mission (UNPROFOR). Those guilty of the crime (among others Ratko Mladić) were tried by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, which was established by the Security Council in 1993. This court – similarly to the International Court of Justice – concluded that the murder of male Muslims made it impossible for their group to continue in existence in specific areas, and that, therefore, taking into consideration the intent of the perpetrators, the Srebrenica Massacre should be recognized as an act of genocide.

The story of Rafał Lemkin and his Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide is an occasion to engage the students in a discussion not only about the concept of genocide itself but also the various examples of the crime throughout history. It can also be used as a point of entry for a discussion on the role of the law in shaping the conscience and the influence of the media on the behavior of certain groups in society – on the shaping of something which Lemkin himself idealistically called “the world’s conscience.” These discussions can take place in history, social studies, geography, ethics and religion classes.

Below, we present possible introductions to these types of discussions. Part I presents a multifaceted concept of workshops concerning the concept of genocide and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Part II provides teachers with a selection of supplementary workshop forms which can be used depending on time limits.

Educational goals:

At the end of the course the student will:

- be able to recognize the concepts of: genocide, the United Nations, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and connect them to Rafał Lemkin
- know who Rafał Lemkin was
- know and understand the motives which drove Lemkin in his work on the Convention
- understand the key postulates of the Convention
- be able to cite examples of genocide from recent international history

As well as:

- possess the tools necessary to attempt an understanding of the influence of law and the media on the behavior of individuals and society
- consider the role of personal responsibility of the individual in preventing the crime of genocide
- understand the complexity of the problem in declaring certain atrocities as genocide

Work methods:

- brainstorming / mind mapping
- quick writing
- mini-lecture
- source analysis in groups

As well as:

- artwork in groups
- teaching discussions / dialogs
- Oxford debate

Materials:

- post-it notes, A0 paper
- markers, scissors
- timeline hung on the wall or laid out on the floor
- collection of old newspapers, color and black-and-white
- map of the world in A4

Prior to the lesson, the teacher divides the students into 6 groups. Each group receives one of the following topics: the Armenian Genocide, the Holocaust, the mass murder of the Polish intelligentsia by the Germans during World War II, the Srebrenica massacre, the murder of Yazidis by ISIS, the atrocities in Rwanda. The teacher will then ask the students to read through source material and search the internet with the help of the links that he or she provides (see section Workshop source material). During their reading, the students will attempt to find answers to the questions: what happened? Where? When? Under what circumstances?

Immediately prior to the lesson, the teacher will place the timeline in a visible location. At the center of the timeline should be the year in which Lemkin's Genocide Convention was adopted (1948).

Part I – workshop (35 min)

1. Quick writing / brainstorming / mind mapping. Engaging students and checking their knowledge on the phenomenon of genocide (5 min)

At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher asks the students to write their personal feelings related to the topic of genocide (these do not have to be whole sentences, e.g. not interested, it is boring etc.) on post-it notes, fold the cards in half and put them in a safe place (in their pockets, under their pencil cases etc.). The teacher reassures them that they will not be read.

The teacher then writes the word GENOCIDE on the board and asks students to provide associations with this concept, which he or she then writes on the board. The teacher then encourages further associations (killing, crime, war, suffering, etc.) and asks if the words "law" and "conscience" can be placed on the mind map. If the class does not accept the suggestion then the words are not included on the board.

The teacher asks the students what events they associate with the word "genocide" and writes them as key words on the board and joins them to the mind map (they may also have come up earlier).

2. Lecture (5 min)

The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The teacher gives students a printout of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, briefly explains what the document is and when and why it was adopted by the UN and mentions the decisive role of Rafał Lemkin – an idealistic lawyer from Poland, whose personal experiences made it impossible for him to remain indifferent to the phenomenon of genocide and decided to counteract it.

3. Reading and analyzing the Convention (20 min)

The teacher asks the students to read articles 1–6 of the convention aloud (preferably with several people taking part). Then the students form groups and look for answers to one of six questions according to the group number:

- Whom does the Convention protect from punishment if it is proven that that person has committed genocide?
- What acts are genocidal according to the Convention?
- What are the specific punishments named in the Convention?
- What intentions must guide the perpetrator for the act to be considered genocide?
- Besides the act of genocide, what else is punishable by the Convention?
- What institution, according to the Convention, is to issue sentences related to genocide?

At the same time, students consider if the events they read about in their sources material before the lesson can be considered genocide according to the Convention.

Then the teacher asks the questions to the class and each group answers and explains why they think as they do.

4. Work on the timeline (5 min)

The teacher places the text of the Convention in a central place on the timeline affixed to the wall or on the floor. Students stick cards with their events in the right places before and after the time the Convention was adopted.

Part II – additional workshop forms

A) Teaching discussion / dialog (min. 15 min)

Pointing to the timeline, where the moment when the Convention was adopted is marked in the center, the teacher asks the students: do you think that passing this type of law matters? Does the Convention affect reality? What is the role of law in forming the consciences and attitudes of individuals and groups?

The teacher talks briefly about Rafał Lemkin's academic activities and his autobiography, which he wrote at the end of his life, and asks for a passage to be read aloud which includes Lemkin's conversation with his students at Yale in the USA.

Can you really achieve results against such a disease?

Yes, you can, if you do not look at the watch while you are asking this question. It will take a long time before results are noticeable. The Genocide Convention is only a framework for this task, a rallying point for thinking and acting. A starting point for a new conscience! Not only lawyers but also representatives of other disciplines will have to help. The Genocide Convention is predestined not only to punish but also to prevent genocide. The work of the anthropologist, social psychologist, historian, and even the economist could help in planning prevention. Only a combination of punishment and prevention can bring results. Through repeated invocation of court action over a long time, through repeated condemnation of genocide in public opinion, conscience in the form of the integrity of the other group will grow. [...] [Genocide] must be condemned by national society. It was made an international crime. This means the condemnation by world society must also follow. The peculiar moral degradation that accompanies this crime against innocent people will help to articulate this condemnation and to mold world conscience.

The teacher explains that Rafał Lemkin wanted to involve many people, institutions and professions in the work of "shaping the conscience of the world". He believed that after many years, with appropriate comprehensive action, humanity would change and become sensitive to the phenomenon of genocide.

- Does constant repetition in various spaces (including media) make us more sensitive as individuals to the phenomenon of genocide or taking another's life (or perhaps it desensitizes us?) How do you react to information about acts which bear the signs of genocide that you see on the Internet or on TV?
- Do you believe that Lemkin's dream of shaping the conscience of the world can come true?
- Do you see any role for yourself and your generation to play in the process that Rafał Lemkin dreamed of?

B) Group work on: a poster / newspaper / speech. Students work in groups (1-6) (30 min)

The teacher gives each group: A0 paper, markers, scissors, a set of old newspapers (color and black-and-white), photocopied maps of the world in A4 format.

- Create a poster about the sources of the events described in your source material, which you will display in the UN building in New York to convince the delegates participating in the proceedings that they should deal with the described events. Think about whether you can use the word "genocide" in your material.
- Create the first page of a newspaper, the main page of a news website or a screenshot from television news about the events described in your source material. Remember about all the important elements in each of the media forms: headlines, columns, titles, name of the medium etc. (examples of various media: opinion magazines (e.g. "Wprost", "Do Rzeczy", "Newsweek"), television news (e.g. Polsat News, BBC, FOX NEWS); daily newspapers (e.g. "Rzeczpospolita", "New York Times", "The Daily Telegraph"), tabloids ("The Sun"), an information website (e.g. pap.pl, wpolityce.pl, wyborcza.pl). Think about whether you can use the word "genocide" in your material. For this option, the groups additionally draw their type of medium at random.
- Write a speech to be presented at the UN assembly to discuss with the events described in your source material.

Presentation of results (30 min). Each group discusses their poster (or, in option 3, gives their speech), remembering to provide information about what happened, where, when, and under what circumstances.

Summary. The teacher summarizes the work of students and briefly comments on each piece of work and notes that genocide-related events have existed for a long time and are still present in the modern world.

C) Oxford debate (min. 40 min)

What is an Oxford debate?

In an Oxford debate, two teams meet to discuss a thesis. The thesis is in the form of an affirmative sentence. The role of one of the teams is to confirm it (proposal side), and the other team to overthrow it (opposition side). The teams will be told the thesis early enough so that they can prepare. The side they choose will be decided by a draw, usually 15 minutes before the debate. By using this form of debate in a lesson, the rules can be bent and both the sides and the thesis itself for which the teams must prepare can be chosen in the preceding lesson.

The Oxford debate is led by the chair, who gives voice to the various members of the teams and ensures that the time limits are respected.

A team consists of 4 speakers who take the floor alternately: 1st proposition speaker, 1st opposition speaker, 2nd proposition speaker, 2nd opposition speaker, etc. Each speaker has 4 minutes to speak and has a specific role to play in the debate:

- first speaker – introduce the debate, define the concepts present in the thesis in the context of the debate, outline the context of the problem
- second speaker – present and develop the arguments to justify the position held in the debate;
- third speaker – counter-argue; counter the opponent's position
- fourth speaker – summarize the debate, indicate the points that determine the advantage of one's team in the debate

Each speaker traditionally begins his or her speech with the words: "Honorable chair, opposition, dear audience..."

Opponents can ask questions or provide brief information during each speech. If they want to speak in this mode, they signal by raising their hand and wait for the speaker to give them a voice. The question / information should be as short as possible and should start with the words: Mr. Speaker, question... / Mr. Speaker, information... It is customary to assume that the speaker is obliged to accept only two questions / information, if any.

It should be remembered that teamwork and, at the same time, coherence within the team are very important.

During a debate organized in class, other students can be spectators and judges. They will answer the question which side convinced them more of their position. You can also check the students' opinions of the thesis (whether they are for or against) before and after the debate and then the winning team will be the one that caused most people to switch to their side.

- Thesis: The 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide allows us to recognize Stalinist crimes / the Armenian genocide / the Holocaust / the murder of the Polish intelligentsia by the Germans during World War II / the Srebrenica massacre / the crimes in Rwanda / the murder of Yazidis by members of ISIS as acts of genocide.

6. Quick writing. Closing exercise (3 min)

The students are asked to look at the cards containing their associations with the word "genocide" that were prepared at the beginning of the lesson. The teacher asks if their feelings and associations are different now than at the beginning of the lesson. The students are asked to write on their cards what comes to their mind now. The cards are for them, they do not need to be read out.

The annihilation of the Polish intelligentsia during the Second World War, 1939–1945 Estimated number of victims: unknown

The Germans, who occupied the Polish territory during the World War II, believed that the Polish intelligentsia posed a serious threat to their plans and therefore had to be eliminated. German terror claimed victims from among all professional groups: lawyers, medical doctors, engineers, office workers, social and political activists, members of uniformed services, sportsmen, journalists, scientists, teachers, artists and clergymen. The actions taken against the Polish intelligentsia were planned and carried out methodically. Arrests were conducted e.g. on the basis of prosecution lists compiled before the war, featuring over 60,000 names. Members of the intelligentsia was harassed throughout the entire war, but it was at the beginning of the occupation that they experienced the most tragic instances of persecution. The *Intelligenzaktion*, i.e. the German operation against the Polish intelligentsia in the territories incorporated into the Third Reich, lasted from September 1939 to April 1940 and resulted in deaths of about 50,000 Poles. Another 50,000 were deported to concentration camps, where the majority of them perished due to severe maltreatment and harsh conditions. Similar operation carried out in the territory of the General Government was the *AB-Aktion (Außerordentliche Befriedungsaktion)*, during which the Germans murdered another 6,500 Poles in the period from May to July 1940.

Tadeusz Wągrowski, testimony concerning the German occupation of Poland

“Being a member of the Bar Association of the Appellate District in Warsaw, I am familiar with the details of the persecution of Warsaw lawyers. After the establishment of the German general administration authorities for the General Government [...] Wendorf, a Polish citizen of German nationality, [...] was appointed Commissioner for Reorganization of the Bar in the Warsaw district [...].

The first mass repressions of lawyers took place in the spring of 1940, when all those present in the lawyers’ cafeteria were detained [...] The Gestapo arrested around 40 people; they were then sent to Auschwitz, from where no-one returned. Subsequent mass arrests took place on 2 May and 3 July, while the largest occurred on the night from 11 to 12 July 1940, when one hundred and several dozen lawyers were detained. [...] Several of the arrestees were released due to their advanced age [...], but the rest were sent to Auschwitz, or to Oranienburg or Mauthausen. They were deported to these camps after first spending about two months in Pawiak prison**.*

From among all these people, as far as I can remember, only a few came back [...]. The rest died or were murdered in the camps. These four mass arrests encompassed more than 300 persons and were aimed solely at exterminating the intelligentsia. [...] This was sometimes accompanied by the arrests of lawyers’ family members. [...] In addition, in the case of arrests based on lists it also happened that if a lawyer was not present at his chambers, the Germans would arrest his partner or trainee instead. Sometimes even all the clients present in the waiting room would be detained.”

source: the online database “Chronicles of Terror” (www.chronicsofterror.pl)

Mieczysław Jan Michałowicz, a physician, testimony concerning the German occupation of Poland

“I have been the director of the University of Warsaw Children’s Clinic for 25 years. The very first thing which we heard in the hospitals was the declaration of Dr. Schrempf, which informed us that all teaching activity was forbidden, and indeed [...] punishable by death. [...] The same went for instructing young doctors and other members of the male and female medical personnel. [...]

*Thus, had we adhered to these regulations, that which is termed the development of scientific thought would have been obliterated outright. This obliteration did go ahead, though. After I was arrested on 10 November 1942, I was thrown into a cell in Pawiak prison** where I met Drewnowski, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Technology, the Rev. Archutowski, Rector of the Seminary, and numerous others – Poland’s brain, so to speak. Out of the 28 persons detained in that cell, only four have survived. It must be said that this operation [the AB-Aktion] resulted in the death of 46% of professors of Warsaw University. Certain faculties, for instance the Faculty of Law, were nearly wholly liquidated. [...]*

Rev. Archutowski was wearing clerical clothing. This was enough of a pretext for him to be maltreated and severely beaten. After he was thrown back into our cell, we – his cellmates – wanted to show him our sympathy and respect. We therefore approached him, trying to calm him down, some kissing his hands, etc. Suddenly, the door was opened and an SS guard stormed into the cell. He beat us all. Then, he ordered that the Reverend’s clothes be ripped off and put on Bombel, who was a Jew.”

source: the online database “Chronicles of Terror” (www.chronicsofterror.pl)

* Gestapo – the secret political police of the Third Reich, which also operated in the occupied territories

** Pawiak – the largest German prison in occupied Warsaw

Additional sources:



Collection of testimonies – To annihilate the nation: intelligentsia, institutions, culture the online database “Chronicles of Terror” (www.chronicsofterror.pl).

The Holocaust – the mass extermination of European Jews

Estimated number of victims: 6 million

The Holocaust was based on planned policies aimed at extermination of the Jewish nation, introduced by the German Third Reich during World War II. The Jews living in the territories incorporated into and occupied by the German Reich were first subject to legal discrimination and stigmatization, and deprived of their property. Then the Germans separated Jews from the rest of society, forcing them to move to closed housing districts – ghettos. The inhabitants of overcrowded ghettos suffered from hunger and infectious diseases, many of them died of exhaustion. In January 1942, during the Wannsee Conference, the German senior government officials decided to implement the so-called “Final solution to the Jewish question.” Jews of both sexes and all ages within German-occupied Europe were consequently transported to extermination camps, where they were methodically murdered in the gas chambers. Their corpses were burned in order to eliminate all evidence of the crime. Every form of aid provided to Jews in German-occupied Poland was punishable by death.

Wacław Wołosz, a railwayman from Sokołów, who witnessed transports of Jews being sent to the death camps

If memory serves me right, transports of Jews to Treblinka station began to pass through Sokołów station in August 1942. As far as I remember, such transports were very frequent during the period between the said date and New Year's Day 1943. I would even say that they arrived daily, whereas sometimes it was a single transport, at other times two, three or even four. [...] Each comprised 60 to 70 wagons, with each wagon containing between 100 and 150 people, which numbers were written in chalk on the wagons.

These transports were not indicated on the timetable, and Sokołów station was only notified of an approaching transport by being given the train number. Trains were escorted by Germans and Ukrainians, who sometimes allowed water to be handed out to those on the transport, but they normally did not let anybody near the train, and fired shots when any attempt was made to get out of the wagons (through the windows, because the doors were locked), so after the train had passed, there were a lot of corpses lying around the station and along the tracks.

The German Gendarmerie from Sokołów would then arrive at the station to finish off any wounded.

In general, the entire railway between Siedlce and Treblinka is a grave. Let me add that on a couple of occasions I managed to talk to people on the first transports. They were certain that they were going to a labor camp. Later, the people already knew they were going to a death camp.

source: the online database "Chronicles of Terror" (www.chronicsofterror.pl)

Mieczysław Maślanko, a Jewish lawyer from Warsaw

I am currently, and I was before the war, a lawyer in Warsaw. During the occupation, when the Ghetto was set up, I worked in the Legal Department of the Jewish council. Consequently, I was able to gain a better understanding of the German authorities' approach to the "Jewish problem." The Germans strove to accomplish the complete annihilation of Jews – this was the aim they sought to achieve consistently from the very beginning of the occupation.

Proof of this is that in September 1939, that is still during the Polish-German war, Heydrich, Himmler's deputy, issued an order to the heads of Security Police groups in which he indicated that the ultimate objective was the total extermination of Jews. [...] In the Warsaw District, the person in charge of the civil authorities was Ludwig Fischer [...].

Before the biological extermination of Jews started, Fischer issued a number of directives that were aimed at oppressing them morally and materially. A good case in point were the regulations that obliged Jews to wear arm bands, or banning them from walking along certain streets [...]. Simultaneously, the district authorities issued an order in accordance with which Jews were removed from the Bar, they had to hand over their property and their commercial establishments to appointed administrators, and they were banned from running commercial enterprises [...].

As a result of these regulations, Jewish people were deprived of any possibility of making money. In order to earn a living, the more enterprising individuals were compelled to engage in illegal trade.

The Germans took advantage of this and unleashed a witch-hunt against Jews, accusing them of usury and profiteering. [...] The Gestapo conducted their own operation against Jews, which was coordinated with the actions of the administrative authorities. The German police visited Jewish flats, taking furniture, carpets and valuables. To all intents and purposes, Jews were treated like outlaws. [...] In October 1940, Fischer issued an order setting up a closed Jewish quarter. [...] The biological destruction of the Jewish population started the moment the Ghetto was established, however this operation was conducted relatively slowly. The total – albeit slow – extermination of Jews was ushered in by the following directives:

1) Minimum food rations: a person received 2 kilograms of bread and a few decagrams of marmalade per month on the basis of food coupons. [...] Every day in the street you would come across the corpses of people who had died of hunger. [...]

3) Unprecedented overpopulation, resettlement of the Jewish population (who were robbed of everything beforehand) from the provinces to the Warsaw Ghetto, the lack of proper accommodation for these people, poverty, deprivation and filth – caused the outbreak of a typhus epidemic, which decimated the residents of the Ghetto. The lack of coal meant that buildings were insufficiently heated, and consequently parts of the sewage system were damaged by frost; in turn, there was more filth in the quarter, especially since the Germans did not grant permission to remove rubbish from the Ghetto. All this influenced the spread of the epidemic. [...]

5) The Arbeitsamt used Jews for forced labor outside the Ghetto. It was hard work, for example the construction of roads, clearing sewers, river engineering. Laborers stayed in labor camps for several weeks or even months, and they were beaten, starved and forced to work like a horse. They usually returned ill, and so haggard and exhausted that they died. [...]

7) The police authorities cooperated in the biological extermination of Jews. It often happened that Jews were arrested and mistreated. Gendarmes would catch Jews who were walking in the street and, for some imaginary offence (e.g. failure to make way to a German), order even older people to do frog jumps in the street, to sweep snow, waste or feces with their bare arms, etc. From March 1941 onwards, small groups of Gestapo men would enter the Ghetto and stop various numbers of Jews, killing them on the spot with revolvers. Such executions, which were repeated practically daily and nightly, and they had not yet then been introduced in the "Aryan" quarter. [...]

At that point the concerted extermination of Jews was speeded up. From 22 June until 18 August 1942, entire blocks of buildings were surrounded by SS units and the residents thrown outside, only to be taken to the transshipment square and gassed in wagons or transported away to camps. [...]

In January 1943, there was a literal slaughter of Jews; during two days, 4,000 people were murdered by the Germans and 5,500 were deported. On 19 April 1943, directly before the outbreak of the uprising in the Ghetto, I was arrested and sent to Majdanek. Almost everybody who was deported from the Warsaw Ghetto was murdered in the concentration camps. One of the most horrible extermination camps was that in Treblinka, which was located in the Warsaw District and established by Fischer's order."

Additional sources:



Witnesses to the Age of Shoah – a documentary by the Pilecki Institute



The Holocaust – an exhibition by the Institute of National Remembrance (download)

The Armenian genocide, 1915–1917

Estimated number of victims: 1–1.5 million

About 1,500,000 ethnic Armenians were killed in the years 1915–1917 as a result of the order issued by the highest Turkish authorities. The nationalist Turkish government set out to establish a living space for their people in Anatolia. The Armenian inhabitants of the region were brutally murdered on a mass scale. The Armenian towns and settlements were surrounded by the Turkish army. Some inhabitants were murdered on the spot, others died of starvation, thirst and exhaustion, during kilometers-long marches through the desert. The groups who experienced the most severe forms of persecution were the intelligentsia and the Armenian clergy. The Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day is observed on 24 April – the day when the order was issued and when the first mass arrest was carried out, which led to the death of nearly 2,300 members of the Armenian intelligentsia.

An account by Leslie Davis, American Consul, from June 1915

A more pitiable sight cannot be imagined. They are almost without exception ragged, filthy, hungry, and sick. This is not surprising in view of the fact that they have been on the road for nearly two months with no change of clothing, no chance to wash, no shelter, and little to eat. I watched them one time when their food was brought. Wild animals could not be worse. They rushed upon the guards carrying the food and the guards beat them back with clubs hitting hard enough to kill sometimes. To watch them one could hardly believe that these people were human beings.

Norman M. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred. Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century*, Cambridge–London 2001.

Fragment of the book *Ormianie. Historia zapomnianego ludobójstwa* by Yves Ternon

They managed to avoid bullets and knives, they survived torture, heat, cold, disease, hunger and thirst. In comparison, the 'natural selection' awaiting them at the 'place of exile' seemed outright ridiculous to these long columns of haggard wraiths, whose only immediate goal was to secure a piece of bread and a mouthful of water. The flicker of life proved resilient beyond all imagination: first it allowed them to reach their destination, and then cheat death – awaiting them in the sands of Mesopotamia – by a few months. All were banished from Aleppo to the desert: the inhabitants of Zeytin; people from the eastern provinces, filled with hellish visions; the Armenians from Western Anatolia, who came by train but were already prepared for the agony after crossing the Amanus and Taurus; finally, those from the plains of Cilicia, the most privileged ones, for they still carried their luggage or even came on ox carts. It was easy to march this human mass, consisting solely of women and children, from camp to camp, making them die on the way – 'until thousands turn into hundreds, and hundreds into a small group that will march so long until it ceases to exist. And thus the destination will be reached.' In this way the last Armenians perished in the sands. [...]

When in November 1915 a military doctor, an Armenian by origin, was sent by the authorities to inspect refugee camps, he was so shocked that – after he completed the inspection – he decided to desert to bear testimony to what he had witnessed: when he was in Jarabulus, he saw chetes selling 300 Armenian girls – survivors from the columns from Diyarbakır, Madin and Harpoot – at a slave market. In Meskene, where the road from Aleppo reaches the Euphrates, under the escort of two Turkish gendarmes, he visited a camp of 5,000 people from the plains of Cilicia: they were ragged and deprived of shelter. Surrounding them were thousands of graves of those who had died of thirst in the scorching sun."

Y. Ternon, *Ormianie. Historia zapomnianego ludobójstwa*, Kraków 2005, p. 253–254.

Additional sources:



Website of an educational project concerning the Armenian genocide



Documentary on the Armenian genocide by the BBC

The Rwandan genocide, 1994

Estimated number of victims: 800,000–1,000,000

Rwanda, Africa. A conflict between two ethnic groups escalated in April 1994: the more numerous Hutu (about 85% of the population) attacked the Tutsi minority (about 14% of the population). The murders were committed by the Hutu militia, state forces and civilians. The pretext for the massacre was

the killing of presidents of Rwanda and Burundi, whose airplane was shot down when the politicians were returning from peace talks that were supposed to put a stop to the conflict between the government officials representing the Hutu and the Tutsi-dominated army. Among the victims were also moderate Hutus, like Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana, who was murdered along with 10 Belgian soldiers assigned to guard her.

The Ten Commandments of the Hutu

- 1) Any Hutu male who marries a Tutsi woman, keeps a Tutsi concubine or makes a Tutsi woman his secretary or protégée shall be deemed a traitor.
- 2) Every Hutu male must know that our Hutu daughters are more dignified and conscientious in their role of woman, wife or mother. Are they not pretty, good secretaries and more honest!
- 3) Hutu women, be vigilant and bring your husbands, brothers and sons back to their senses.
- 4) Every Hutu male must know that all Tutsi are dishonest in their business dealings. They are only seeking their ethnic supremacy. Any Hutu male who enters into a business partnership with Tutsis, invests his money in a Tutsi company, lends to or borrows from a Tutsi or grants business favors to Tutsis is a traitor.
- 5) Strategic positions in the political, administrative, economic, military and security domain should, to a large extent, be entrusted to Hutus.
- 6) The education sector must be in the majority Hutu.
- 7) The Rwandan Armed Forces should be exclusively Hutu. No soldier must marry a Tutsi woman.
- 8) Hutus must cease having pity for the Tutsi.
- 9) The Hutu male, wherever he may be, must be united in solidarity, and be concerned about the fate of his Hutu brothers. The Hutu at home and abroad must constantly seek friends and allies for the Hutu Cause, beginning with our Bantu brothers. They must constantly counteract Tutsi propaganda. The Hutu must be firm and vigilant towards their common Tutsi enemy.
- 10) The 1959 social revolution, the 1961 referendum and the Hutu ideology must be taught to Hutus at all levels.

Appeal to the Bahutu Conscience (With the Hutu Ten Commandments), "Kangura", December 1990.
<https://www.scribd.com/document/327642633/Hutu-Propaganda>

Fragment of the 1993 article from the Hutu "Kangura" magazine entitled *A cockroach cannot give birth to a butterfly*

We began by saying that a cockroach cannot give birth to a butterfly. It is true. A cockroach gives birth to another cockroach... The history of Rwanda shows us clearly that a Tutsi stays always exactly the same, that he has never changed. The malice, the evil are just as we knew them in the history of our country. We are not wrong in saying that a cockroach gives birth to another cockroach. Who could tell the difference between the Inyenzi who attacked in October 1990 and those of the 1960s. They are all linked... their evilness is the same. The unspeakable crimes of the Inyenzi of today... recall those of their elders: killing, pillaging, raping girls and women, etc.

A. Des Forges, "Leave None to Tell the Story". *Genocide in Rwanda*, Human Rights Watch, New York 1999, p. 73.

Additional sources:



<https://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/historical-background.shtml>



Documentaries on the Rwandan genocide (see especially: *The Genocide Convention: A Call for Action* and *20 Years Challenging Impunity – ICT*)

The Srebrenica massacre, 1995

Estimated number of victims: **8,400**

As a result of the breakup of Yugoslavia, which began in 1991, the former Yugoslav republics entered a number of conflicts. One of them was the conflict between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, which broke out in March 1992, after Bosnia declared independence. The state of Serbia stood up for about 600,000 Serbs who lived within the territory of Bosnia. The newly established, poorly armed Bosnian army had no chance to defeat the Serbian troops that assembled from the former Yugoslav army. Bosnia was being defeated, but the Serbian army failed to capture the capital – Sarajevo. The siege of the city lasted more than 3 years. The UN attempted to put a stop to the tragic conflict, in which both sides acted with brutality and murdered civilians. In May 1993, six safe zones were established and protected by the international troops who had, however, no permission to use force. The zones were to be excluded from the military actions and serve as shelter for civilians. One of such zones was near the Bosnian town – Srebrenica. In July 1993, the Serbian troops entered the area.

An excerpt from *Jakbyś kamień jadła* by Wojciech Tochman, a reportage on the Bosnian War

The end came on 11 July 1995. The Bosnian defense retreated from the suburbs upon learning from the UN that NATO planes were about to bomb Serbian positions. They didn't come on time, though; the Serbs entered the city.

On that day the women from our bus experienced the kind of fear that Mubina doesn't know. She didn't undergo a selection in the village of Potočari. But Zineta M. (48 years old) did. She now lives in Vogošća near Sarajevo, but she's not coming with us. After that July she visited her home three times; she doesn't feel equal to the fourth visit yet. On that day, when Ratko Mladić's forces appeared on the outskirts of the city, people flocked to Potočari of their own volition. They counted on help from the Dutch soldiers stationed there. Zineta was in a column of 20,000 people with her daughter (then 11) and older son (then 20).

In Potočari, the women and children were ordered to the right and the men to the left. Whether a boy was a child or a man was determined by means of a string fastened at a height of 150 centimeters (some say it was 140, others 160). All those taller were torn away from their mothers.

The Dutch watched helplessly.

'We called him Kiram,' emphasizes Zineta.

'Don't look at me so, mother,' he told her at parting. 'They won't kill us all here.'

'Leave my brother alone!' shouted her daughter, but some Serb grabbed her and pushed her towards the women.

'I counted his steps as they were taking him away,' says Zineta. 'One, two, ten; further and further away from me. I screamed and he looked back. Twenty, thirty, he was almost by that factory building. The Chetniks stopped him there and told him to throw his bag to the side. The pile of suitcases was some two-stories high. Kiram looked at us once more. He entered the building. On that day in Potočari the heat was unbearable, people had nothing to drink. Among the Serbs, the women recognized their neighbors and colleagues from school or work. Pupils recognized their teachers. Finally the Army Commander, General Ratko Mladić himself appeared in Potočari. 'I have come to tell you that Srebrenica is Serbian,' he told the women over a loudspeaker. 'There is no need to kill you.'

Separated from the women were 7,000 men (some speak of 10,000, others of 12,000)."

W. Tochman, *Jakbyś kamień jadła*, Sejny 2005, p. 24–25.

An excerpt from *They Would Never Hurt a Fly* by Slavenka Drakulić, a reportage on the trial of Serbian war criminals before the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia

Amazingly, there is often at least one person who manages to survive a mass execution. One of them, a witness in the tribunal known as O, took the stand at the Krstić trial to tell about the biggest mass killing in Europe since the World War II. He was just seventeen years old when it happened: "Some people shouted, 'Give us some water first, then kill us.' I was really sorry that I would die thirsty, and I was trying to hide among the people as long as I could, like everybody else. I just wanted to live for another second or two. And when it was my turn, I jumped out with what I believe were four other people. I was walking with my head bent down, and I wasn't feeling anything.... I saw rows of killed people. It looked as if they had been lined up, one row after the other. And then I thought that I would die very fast, that I would not suffer. And I just thought that my mother would never know where I had ended up.

As the young man called Witness 'O' was speaking at the Tribunal, Krstić seemed visibly shaken by his words. He did not know where to look. This underscored even more my impression of his compassion for his victims. He appeared to find it almost unbearable to listen to this witness, as if this one young man, who should have been one of the seven thousand murdered, who had survived to tell about it only by chance, finally brought home to Krstić the reality of his deeds. But then the prosecutor started to cross-examine him. And then my perception of Radislav Krstić changed drastically.

Krstić's line of defence was a simple one. He did not deny that war crimes had been committed by Republika Srpska units, but he denied issuing orders for these crimes."

They Would Never Hurt a Fly. War Criminals on Trial in The Hague, New York 2004, p. 98–99.

Additional sources:



A clip commemorating the Srebrenica massacre, published by the UN on the 20th anniversary of the event

The massacre of the Yazidis, 2014

Estimated number of victims: 5,000

On 3 August 2014, the terrorist organization Islamic State launched an attack on the Sinjar District in Northern Iraq, inhabited mainly by the Yazidis – a religious group established in the 12th century. The Kurdish troops protecting the area withdraw without a fight and left the Yazidis at the mercy of the terrorists. The ISIS militants forced the captured men to convert to Islam on pain of death. Women and children were enslaved and held captive in harsh conditions. About 200,000 civilians sought shelter in the nearby mountains with no food or water. Another 200,000 fled to Kurdistan, leaving behind all of their possessions.

An account by Nadia Murad, a Yazidi woman who spent many months in Islamic State captivity

I fell away from the window as the room erupted in screams. "They killed them!" the women shouted, while the militants swore at us to be quiet. My mother was now sitting on the floor, motionless and silent, and I ran to her. My whole life, whenever I'd been scared, I'd gone to my mother for comfort. [...] I always believed her. My mother had lived through so much and never complained.

Now she sat on the floor with her head in her hands. "They've killed my sons," she sobbed.

"No more screaming," a militant ordered, pacing the crowded room. "If we hear another sound, we will kill you." Sobs turned into choking sounds as the women tried their best to stop crying. I prayed that my mother hadn't seen her sons loaded onto the trucks, as I had.

Naif's Arab friend called him from his village. "I heard shots," he said. He was crying. A moment later, in the distance, he saw the figure of a man. "Someone is running toward our village," he told our mukhtar's brother. "It's your cousin."

When Naif's cousin got to the village, he fell down, panting. "They killed everyone," he said. "They lined us up and made us climb down into the ditches" – shallow trenches that, in wetter months, hold rainwater for irrigation. "The younger-looking ones they made lift up their arms to check for hair, and if they had none, they were taken back to the trucks. They shot the rest of us." Almost all the men had been killed right there, their bodies falling on one another like trees all hit at once by lightning.

Hundreds of men were taken behind the school that day, and only a small number survived the firing squad. My brother Saeed was shot in the leg and shoulder, and after he fell, he closed his eyes and tried to calm his heart and stop breathing so loudly. A body fell on top of him. It belonged to a big, heavy man who was even denser now that he was dead, and Saeed bit his tongue to keep from groaning under the crushing weight. At least this body will hide me from the militants, he thought, and closed his eyes. The ditch smelled of blood. Beside him another man who was not yet dead groaned and cried from the pain, begging someone to help him. Saeed heard the footsteps of the militants as they walked back in his direction. One of the militants said, "That dog is still alive," before letting go another deafening round of automatic fire."

Nadia Murad (with Jenna Krajeski), *The Last Girl: My Story of Captivity, and my Fight Against the Islamic State*, New York 2017, p 103–104.

Additional sources:



The UN news website



Documentary about the Yazidis
by the German public international
broadcaster Deutsche Welle