

How We Can Prevent Genocide

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I am honoured to speak at this Holocaust Observance on behalf of Genocide Watch and its founder and director, Dr. Gregory Stanton. Genocide Watch is a non-profit organization aimed at predicting, preventing, stopping and punishing the crime of genocide, the worst crime against humanity and a major human rights violation.

After the Second World War the United Nations committed itself to preventing and punishing the crime of genocide by adopting the Genocide Convention. The UN resolved “Never Again.” Instead, however, genocides and other mass murders killed even more people in the second half of the twentieth century. To mention only a few figures: 1 million Ibos in Nigeria, 1.7 million Cambodians, 800,000 Tutsis in Rwanda, 2 million Sudanese. There have been at least seventy genocides since 1945. The truth is thus that genocide has occurred “again and again.”

Why does the world still have genocide after it was outlawed? Can we ever end genocide forever? Genocide Watch believes we can.

Dr. Stanton has developed a model reflecting the eight stages a process of genocide comprises. First there is classification, when a distinction is made between individuals according to their religious, racial, ethnic or national identity. The second stage is symbolization. Certain symbols, such as a name or a piece of clothing, are imposed on the members of a group. Third, there is dehumanization; the victim group is equated with animals, insects or snakes. The fourth stage of organization is reached when death squads and militias are established. Polarization is the fifth stage and means that groups are driving apart by law, by propaganda and by targeting moderate leaders of the dominant group. In the sixth stage the massacres are actually prepared by trial massacres, by arming and training militias and by forcing victims into ghettos or concentration camps. The seventh stage called extermination means that actual genocidal massacres take place. The eighth stage is reached when the perpetrator’s group denies a genocide ever took place.

This model of Dr. Stanton is the first to explain the logic of the genocidal process. For each of the 8 stages Dr. Stanton has identified counter-measures that can stop the process, and prevent the next stages from taking place. Consequently, by understanding genocide, it becomes possible to stop it.

This model allows Genocide Watch to assess the risk of genocide in countries across the globe. On the basis of these risk assessments we predict whether genocidal massacres are likely to occur and make policy recommendations to key government officials on how to prevent genocide. These risk assessments are publicized on our website, www.genocidewatch.org, in order to raise awareness among the public.

I cannot emphasize enough that the model developed by Dr. Stanton allows us to predict and prevent genocides. Notwithstanding this fact, a Genocide Emergency is issued for eight countries, inter alia

the DRC, Sudan, Ethiopia, Afghanistan and Syria. This means that at this very moment actual genocidal massacres are taking place in these countries.

So why haven't genocides been prevented? An important factor is that genocides are mostly carried out by the state's own security agencies. Consequently, in most cases international intervention is the only adequate response against genocidal massacres. However, there is no international rapid response force. This fatal flaw in the UN system can be changed and Genocide Watch is committed to bringing about this necessary change by finally implementing the relevant provisions of the Chapter VII of the UN Charter, to create a standing international intervention force to stop genocide and aggression. Some think this is just a dream. But NATO's action in Libya proved that international action combined with local resistance can overthrow a brutal tyrant.

There is, however, a second problem; in most cases the international community lacks the necessary political will to take action to stop genocidal massacres. The UN Security Council is often paralyzed by states that do not want intervention in what they see as their domestic affairs.

But genocide is not a domestic affair. It is a crime against all of humanity. The loss of one Anne Frank, or of one Dorothee Mukandanga – raped and murdered in Rwanda, or of one mother or child in the Nuba Mountains of Sudan as we speak today, is a crime against us all. When a nation-state fails to protect its own citizens, it loses its legitimacy. When it murders them, it must be overthrown. We have entered a new age – the age of the Responsibility to Protect, when sovereignty no longer gives dictators the right to murder their own people.

Genocides can thus be prevented if there is political will at the national and international level to identify the early warning signs of genocidal massacres. Policy makers are afraid to use the word 'genocide' because it might morally require them to take action to prevent its atrocities. However, if we want to prevent genocide, it is necessary to identify its early warning signs and to dare to speak out about "genocide risk" and "potential genocides". If the international community wants to uphold its commitment to prevent the crime of genocide, it is not sufficient to be bystanders while thousands or even millions of people are slaughtered.

We must stand up against genocide.

That is what Genocide Watch does. We monitor situations, assess early warning signs and give policy recommendations. But we also raise the necessary public awareness in order to increase pressure upon national governments and international organizations, such as the UN, the AU, NATO and the EU. International intervention has been effective in Libya and the Ivory Coast. On the other hand, genocidal massacres are currently taking place in Sudan and women are currently being raped in the Democratic Republic of Congo while the world does nothing.

We can no longer be bystanders. We must become upstanders.

Ultimately, genocide must be prevented at the local level, by educating young people that the differences between us, our diversity, should be celebrated, not eliminated. We must teach tolerance in our schools. It will become possible to end genocide forever when we all realize that there is only one race: the human race.