

United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide

The United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was signed in December 1948, and has been in force since January 1951.[1] Article II of the convention defines genocide as **ANY** of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such:[2]

- (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 one group to another group.

The United States ratified the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in 1988.[3]

Eight Stages of Genocide

World identifies a potential genocide by closely examining the dynamics of human rights violations in each situation, and comparing them to the Eight Stages of Genocide, as identified by Gregory Stanton.[4]

1. CLASSIFICATION: Categories of 'us' versus 'them' are identified based on ethnicity, race, religion, or nationality. During the Holocaust, people were separated into Aryans (the 'Master Race') and non-Aryans – including Jews, Roma (gypsies), Poles, homosexuals, Jehovah's witnesses, the disabled, and others.



Yellow star worn by Jews during the Holocaust

2. SYMBOLIZATION: Names or symbols are given to the classified categories. An example includes the yellow star for Jewish people during the Holocaust. Symbolization does not typically result in genocide unless it is accompanied by dehumanization.



Anti-Jewish propaganda

3. DEHUMANIZATION: One group denies the humanity of the other group by equating them with animals, insects, or diseases. This eliminates the normal human revulsion against murder and makes killing someone of the other group as easy as stepping on a bug. During the Holocaust, Jews were called 'rats' by the Nazis. During the Rwandan genocide, Tutsis were labeled 'cockroaches.'

4. ORGANIZATION: Governments, armies, or other groups of power unite and train militias to carry out the genocide. During the Holocaust, the Nazis trained tens of thousands: German military units, mobile killing squads called the Einsatzgruppen, guards for concentration and extermination camps, and the Hitler Youth.



Propaganda for the Hitler Youth

5. POLARIZATION: Extremists further drive the two groups apart by spreading propaganda, limiting contact between them, or creating laws to ostracize one of the groups. In 1933, Hitler enacted the Nuremberg Laws, which made it illegal for an Aryan to marry a Jew. All previous marriages between Aryans and Jews were annulled. Jews were forbidden from displaying the German flag.



Nazi death lists

6. PREPARATION: Victims are identified and separated. Death lists are drawn up. Weapons are distributed.

7. EXTERMINATION: Mass killing of the identified victims begins. At this point, killing is easy and the extermination is quick.

8. DENIAL: Perpetrators of the genocide try to cover up mass killings and intimidate witnesses. They deny that they committed any crimes, and try to blame what happened on the victims.