

RESPONSES TO GENOCIDE

Information



Genocide: How does it happen?

In virtually every country in the world, people of different religions, ethnic and racial backgrounds, and nationalities live peacefully

together. Conflict between groups is not inevitable. So how does genocide happen?

Creating An Enemy and a Divided Society

Perpetrators of genocide use the media to spread propaganda, creating the idea of a dangerous enemy which needs to be got rid of. The Nazis portrayed Jews in this way, and in Rwanda Hutu extremists blamed Tutsis in Rwanda, and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (the Tutsis rebel army in exile in Uganda, known as the RPF) for Rwanda's social, political and economic problems.

Hutu extremists instilled fear into Hutus by making them believe that exiled Tutsis were planning to return to Rwanda to take over the country and grab land from Hutus. Perpetrators of genocide make their 'enemy' subhuman - in Rwanda the Hutu extremists referred to Tutsis as cockroaches - this makes it easier for them to be killed by ordinary people. In Rwanda, racial scientists and anthropologists spread the idea that there were ethnic differences between Hutus and Tutsis. These 'differences' were formalised with identity cards introduced in 1933 by the Belgian colonists and every Rwandan was classified according to ethnicity.

Planning Mass Killing

Perpetrators of genocide plan ways to kill on an industrial scale. In Nazi Germany, technology such as the gas chambers meant that a relatively small number of people could kill millions. In Rwanda, thousands of people were required to carry out the killings because the main instrument of death was the machete: often it took several people to kill one victim.

Genocide During War

Historically, perpetrators have covered up genocide by carrying it out during times of war or civil unrest. The Jewish Holocaust took place during the Second World War, and the genocide of Tutsis by Hutu extremists in Rwanda was during a period of political and social unrest in the Great Lakes region of central Africa.

Authoritarian Governments

Genocide is far more likely to happen in an authoritarian society which demands obedience and where there are limits to freedom of expression and the media. In Rwanda before the genocide, those speaking out against the extremist Hutu government were arrested and often killed.

International Disinterest

Perpetrators of genocide assess what the likely international reaction to their actions will be, and often conclude that they will not be stopped. In Rwanda, despite the fact that extermination of the Tutsis was openly encouraged on the radio, Hutu extremists calculated that the international community would not intervene. They were right – one million Tutsis were slaughtered in 1994 as the rest of the world stood by.

What is the Genocide Convention?

Genocide is 'any one of a number of acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group'.

The word '**genocide**' comes from the Greek **genos**, meaning 'race' or 'tribe', and the Latin suffix **cida**, meaning 'kill'. It was coined by legal expert Ralph Lemkin, in the early 1940's, who wanted to distinguish the premeditated, intentional killing of particular groups from other mass killings.

The **United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide** came into force on the 12th of January 1951. By 1994 over 100 countries had signed up to the genocide convention, meaning that they were bound by international law to both prevent and punish genocide.

Wider Definitions of Genocide

Under the Genocide Convention, to be genocide, the group targeted must be a **national, ethnic racial or religious** one. The words national, ethnic, racial and religious were chosen because belonging to one of these groups is almost always determined by birth, rather than being something a person chooses to do.

Some people claim that the Genocide Convention's definition of genocide is too narrow, because it does not include the intentional killing of others groups of people, for example because of their **political beliefs, sexuality, or socio-economic class**.

Others argue that the killing of a political, socio-economic group etc is not genocide, because as a rule a person voluntarily decides to become a member of one of these groups.

Discussion

1. Do you think there should be a wider definition of genocide in the Genocide Convention? What might be the disadvantages of a wider definition?

2. It has been argued that the slave trade was a form of genocide. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide

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, ethnical, 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.

For the full text of the Convention, please go to:
www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/p_genoci.htm

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The International Response to Genocide

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United Nations Peacekeepers Withdrawn

Ten Belgian peacekeepers were killed on the orders of the Hutu extremists on April 7th 1994. The UN peacekeeping force was withdrawn within days. This was a signal to the Hutu extremists that they could carry out their plans to exterminate all the Tutsis in Rwanda unchecked.

The death of US soldiers in Somalia in 1993, and the subsequent withdrawal of UN peacekeepers from Somalia in March 1994 had made the international community less willing to commit troops to conflict situations.

Lt Gen Dallaire, head of the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission, refused to leave Rwanda, but he and the small group of around 270 soldiers who stayed with him were powerless to stop genocide - in any case they could only act in self-defence.

He turned to the media to try and alert the world to what was happening in Rwanda, sending out broadcasts daily, and continued to demand more troops and resources from the UN headquarters in New York.

Dallaire estimated that with 5500 troops, and a stronger mandate, he could save many thousands of lives. In May 1994, the UN Security Council agreed to send 5500 African troops to Rwanda, but their deployment was delayed due to arguments over who would pay for them. By the time the

genocide had been stopped by the RPF (Rwandan Patriotic Front) in July 1994, they still had not arrived.

Foreign Nationals Evacuated

Countries such as France, America and Belgium evacuated their own citizens, leaving behind Rwandans they had employed in their embassies and organisations. Under a UN mandate, French troops created a safe zone in South West Rwanda. But as RTLM radio advised Hutus to flee in the wake of the RPF advance, the zone provided a safe passage for many Interahamwe militia and other killers to flee to Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo). In total, over two million people fled Rwanda to neighbouring countries. Many killers regrouped in refugee camps, and launched attacks into Rwanda.

How Does the United Nations Security Council Work?

The United Nations was set up in 1945, immediately after the end of the Second World War. In 1946, the United Nations Security Council was established with the specific task of ensuring global peace and security.

The Security Council:

- authorises UN Peacekeeping operations;
- has five permanent members; China, France, the Russian Federation, The United Kingdom and the USA.

- has ten non-permanent members who are elected for two year terms by members of the UN General Assembly, the body which represents all UN members.

Members of the UN General Assembly agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council.

For a major resolution to be passed, nine out of the fifteen Security Council members must vote for it. If one of the permanent members vetoes (votes against) a resolution, it cannot be passed.

In 1994, all five permanent Security Council members had signed up to the genocide convention.

The Rwanda Patriotic Front Stops the Genocide

The Rwanda Patriotic Front, an army of Rwandan Tutsis forcibly exiled to Uganda during the years of Hutu rule in Rwanda, received clear reports from their sources in Kigali that mass killings were underway after April 6th. They realised that 300 Peacekeepers would not be able to stop the slaughter and launched an invasion to stop the killings. The genocide was finally halted in July 1994 when RPF forces took control of Rwanda and established a government of National Unity.

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The International Response to Genocide (continued)

The Refugee Crisis in Neighbouring Countries

By mid July 1994, when the RPF had taken control of Rwanda and stopped the genocide, over two million people, including many of the Hutu extremists and killers, had fled from Rwanda into neighbouring countries, principally to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC - formally Zaire). The international community finally woke up to what was happening in Rwanda, but very little attention was given to the million dead, and hundreds of thousands of wounded, bereaved and internally displaced survivors in Rwanda.

Lindsey Hilsum for the Guardian and Observer and Mark Doyle for the BBC were two of the few journalists who did report on victims and survivors. Largely however, the media concentrated on the humanitarian disaster taking place over Rwanda's borders.

The International Media Reports the Refugee Crisis in DRC

The media reporting of the refugee crisis in countries bordering Rwanda, principally DRC, generated a huge outpouring of sympathy and assistance, but the public did not realise that many of the people they were helping with compassion were those who had shown no mercy as killers just months before. Some of the refugee camps were even run by leaders of the genocide and remnants of the former Rwandan army.

The extremist Hutu government in Rwanda tried to cover up the genocide by claiming that the violence was due to ongoing tribal conflict and civil war with the RPF. The world's media largely believed them, and by depicting the situation

as merely tribal anarchy, the media played into the hands of the killers, concealing the reality of a deliberate, planned and systematic genocide. It is not surprising then, that many outsiders saw the refugees in Congo as victims rather than perpetrators of one of the worst crimes against humanity.

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Resource



The International Response to Genocide

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Read the following excerpts to see how various governments and organisations responded to the unfolding catastrophe in Rwanda.

Phillippe Gaillard, Head of the International Committee of the Red Cross Mission in Rwanda in 1994

Unlike most other humanitarian agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross mission remained in Rwanda for the duration of the genocide. As head of the Red Cross mission in Rwanda, Gaillard challenged the extremist government by informing the world media that Red Cross staff, and innocent civilians were being killed. In an interview in 2003 he said:

'I had to speak, to be outspoken, in such a context. When you're seeing it every day in the streets, in your hospital, on the roads ... In such circumstances, if you don't at least speak out clearly, you are participating in the genocide. If you just shut up when you see what you see -- morally, ethically you cannot shut up. It's a responsibility to speak out. It did not change anything, and it ...[did not] move the international community. I just can say that they cannot tell us or tell me that they didn't know. They were told every day what was happening there.'

(Source: www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ghosts/interviews/gaillard.html)

Oxfam

On the 28th April 1994, Oxfam, a UK based humanitarian agency, released a briefing paper stating that the killings in Rwanda constituted genocide. It warned that the lives of 750,000 people were in danger and requested that the UN Security Council send troops to reinforce the UN position in Rwanda and protect citizens. It was the first British based humanitarian aid agency to publicly use the word 'genocide' to describe what was happening in Rwanda.

The news release begins:

OXFAM FEARS GENOCIDE IS HAPPENING IN RWANDA

Oxfam (UK/Ireland) relief workers in Burundi who have returned from the border with Rwanda fear that the number of killings inside Rwanda may well be much larger than hitherto suspected, and that the pattern of systematic killings of the Tutsi minority group amounts to genocide. The whereabouts of up to half a million Tutsi is not known and their lives are in grave danger...

Despite Oxfam's statement, and pressure from other organisations such as Human Rights Watch, governments did not adopt the term, preferring to use words such as massacres or 'acts of genocide'. However, there is clear evidence that Western governments were receiving accurate intelligence reports of the unfolding situation in Rwanda.

Koffi Annan, United Nations Under Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations in 1994

In 1998 in Kigali, Koffi Annan, U.N. Secretary-General, apologised to the Rwandan Parliament. In 1994 he had been the UN's Under Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations.

"... The world must deeply repent this failure. Rwanda's tragedy was the world's tragedy. All of us who cared about Rwanda, all of us who witnessed its suffering, fervently wish that we could have prevented the genocide. Looking back now, we see the signs which then were not recognized. Now we know that what we did was not nearly enough--not enough to save Rwanda from itself, not enough to honor the ideals for which the United Nations exists. We will not deny that, in their greatest hour of need, the world failed the people of Rwanda ..."

(Source: www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/evil/etc/slaughter.html)

RESPONSES TO GENOCIDE

Resource



The International Response to Genocide (continued)

Lt General Romeo Dallaire - Head of the UN Peacekeeping Mission in Rwanda in 1994

'The international community of which the UN is only a symbol, failed to move beyond self interest for the sake of Rwanda. While most nations agreed that something should be done, they all had an excuse why they should not be the ones to do it. As a result, the UN was denied the political will and material means to prevent the tragedy.'

(Dallaire, Lt Gen Romeo (2005) Shake Hands with the Devil, London, Arrow, p.516)

The US State Department

On June 10th 1994, at a US State Department briefing, State Department spokesperson Christine Shelley said the USA believed 'acts of genocide' had occurred in Rwanda.

Reporter 'How many acts of genocide does it take to make a genocide?'

Shelley 'That's just not a question that I'm in a position to answer.'

Reporter 'Well, is it true that you have specific guidance not to use the word 'genocide' in isolation, but always to preface it with these words 'acts of'?'

Shelley 'I have guidance which I try to use as best as I can. There are formulations that we are using that we are trying to be consistent in our use of. I don't have an absolute categorical prescription against something, but I have the definitions. I have phraseology which has been carefully examined and arrived at as best as we can apply to exactly the situation and the actions which have taken place ... '

(Source: www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/evil/etc/slaughter.html)

Bill Clinton - President of the USA in 1994

Bill Clinton, US President in 1994, gave a speech in Rwanda in 1998 to apologise to the victims of genocide:

'... the international community, together with nations in Africa, must bear its share of responsibility for this tragedy, as well. We did not act quickly enough after the killing began. We should not have allowed the refugee camps to become safe havens for the killers. We did not immediately call these crimes by their rightful name: genocide.'

(Source: www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/evil/etc/slaughter.html)

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Maurice Herson, Oxfam Emergencies Officer, said only slightly over 30,000 Tutsi refugees had crossed the river which marks the Rwanda – Burundi border. They had been attacked along the way and by the Rwandan authorities at the border as they tried to cross. Many survivors had horrific wounds; in some cases people had been wilfully mutilated – their fingers or one foot cut off – rather than killed. He said: "Many had been in hiding and had not eaten for 10 days. I fear that the chances of many more refugees escaping is slim, and that Tutsi still in southern Rwanda have little chance of survival. Either they are being hunted and killed or they are being starved. They face extermination". In Tanzania Alfred Sakafu, Oxfam's Country Representative, reported today that the Kagera river (the Rwanda – Tanzania border) "is full of dead bodies to the extent that our water team cannot make use of Kagera river water to supply to refugees".

The figure of up to half a million people missing is a calculation based upon accounts by refugees, the number of Tutsi believed to have lived in Rwanda and movements of people inside and out of Rwanda in the last three weeks. In total, only about 60-70,000 Tutsi are known to have become refugees in Burundi, Tanzania, Uganda and Zaire so far. Refugees have described how local militias, often with the assistance of local officials systematically hunt and kill people. When the violence first erupted on April 6 it appears that forces within the Rwandan Government armed and directed its youth militias to attack the Tutsi and Hutu liberals and opponents of the regime. Now ministers in the new Government have publicly called on Rwanda National Radio for an end to the massacres. However, the militias have continued to slaughter Tutsi and it appears that the attacks are being incited and organised by powerful political and military groups.

The United Nations Security Council is due to receive an updated report on the Rwanda situation from Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali before 6 May. Oxfam Director David Bryer will meet Dr Boutros-Ghali in Geneva on 5 May. In the light of the appalling suffering in Rwanda Oxfam believes that the UN Security Council must now greatly increase the UN troop presence in Kigali in order to provide greater protection to civilians there and extend protection to other places outside the capital.

It is also vital that the UN gives maximum help in terms of aid and political support to the Organization of African Unity and neighbouring countries. The aim must be to put pressure on the combatants to come to the negotiating table immediately and to ensure regional stability so that the conflict does not spread into Burundi and beyond.

Oxfam is assisting refugees in Zaire, Burundi and Tanzania. In Burundi and Tanzania Oxfam will be providing water and sanitation equipment and engineers. Two planes containing water equipment, feeding kits, knitted tops and clothing leave the UK this weekend (May 1 and 2) for Mwanza airport in Tanzania. Oxfam is appealing to the British and Irish public for money.

ENDS

RESPONSES TO GENOCIDE

Activity

The International Response to Genocide

Discussion

1. Look at the responses to the Rwandan genocide in Resource One.

a) A bystander is someone who is aware of injustice but decides not to act. Which of the following do you think were bystanders in the Rwandan genocide?

- The United Nations Security Council
- Lt General Romeo Dallaire and the UN peacekeepers in Rwanda
- The RPF
- The International Media
- Humanitarian agencies (Oxfam, the Red Cross and those who organised the relief effort for refugees in the Democratic Republic of Congo)
- International governments

b) Why do you think some of them were reluctant to act to stop the genocide?

c) Did they have a responsibility to get involved? Did they have a right not to get involved?

d) What choices were available to them to prevent genocide? Do you think you would have made different decisions if you had been in their shoes?

e) What do you think these responses tell us about the effectiveness of the Genocide Convention in preventing genocide?

2. Were there any heroes in the genocide? Can someone be a hero even if they don't succeed?¹

3. Read the following quotations:

*'A London based correspondent wondered aloud why we should care about disputes in obscure countries. I was taken aback by the question believing that it reflected a narrow view of the world and the issues and emotions that shape our collective history. [...] For me however, the conclusion is unavoidable: genocidal killing in Africa diminishes all of us.'*²

Fergal Keane

*'I believe that the Rwandan genocide should make us all re-examine the meaning of our lives, as we confront the fact that tens of thousands of women were raped and hundreds of thousands of other Rwandans murdered, and we did not stop it.'*³

Lindsey Hilsum

*'If Rwanda's experience could be said to carry any lessons for the world, it was that endangered peoples who depend on the international community for physical protection stand defenceless.'*⁴

Philip Gourevitch

a) What do you think Fergal Keane means when he says genocide 'diminishes all of us', and when Lindsey Hilsum says that we should 'reexamine the meaning of our lives'?

b) Look at Gourevitch's statement. Do you agree with him? Can you think of events happening in the world today which support Gourevitch's view?

1 Question adopted from Facing History and Ourselves (www.facinghistorycampus.org) resource Armenian Genocide: The American Ambassador in Constantinople - Assessment Question 2

2 Keane, Fergal (2004) Season of Blood, Penguin, London, p.30

3 Source: Survivors Fund Annual Review 2004

4 Gourevitch, Philip (1998) We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families, London, Picador, p351

RESPONSES TO GENOCIDE

Teacher's Notes

Teacher's Notes

A. This Topic Responses to Genocide Relates to the Following Areas of the National Citizenship Curriculum for England for KS3 and KS4:

- The legal and human rights and responsibilities underpinning society, and how they relate to citizens;
- The world as a global community, and the political, economic, environmental and social implications of this, and the role of the European Union, the Commonwealth and the United Nations.

B. Learning Objectives of the Responses to Genocide Module:

1. Understand the responsibility to prevent (and punish) the crime of genocide as set out in the Genocide Convention, and assess the limitations of the Convention in doing this.
2. Consider wider interpretations of the term 'genocide', and explore the advantages and disadvantages of using such a broader definition.
3. Consider and evaluate individual and collective actions and responses during the genocide in Rwanda in 1994.
4. Consider the lessons to be learnt from Rwanda in terms of individual and collective responsibility to protect others.

C. Contents of the Responses to Genocide Resource:

- How Does Genocide Happen? - information
- The Genocide Convention - information and discussion
- The International Response to Genocide - information
- The International Response to Genocide - resource
- Oxfam Press Release on Genocide April 1994 - resource
- The International Response to Genocide - activity

D. Discussion Pointers for Activities

The Genocide Convention

Question 1: A wider definition of genocide could diminish the significance of the word; i.e. 'to call everything genocide is to call nothing genocide', and could mean intervention to stop genocide would be less likely. However, students may put forward strong cases for examples of political and other genocides which do not fall under the definition of the Genocide Convention.

Question 2: The claim that slavery was a form of genocide does not really hold up to scrutiny. Genocide scholars point out that while slavery resulted in servitude, and the subsequent death of slaves, the destruction of slaves was not the purpose of slavery; i.e. this was not the intent. Indeed it could be argued that the purpose of slavery was to keep slaves alive, albeit in appalling and degrading circumstances, so that they could work and serve an economic purpose.

For example Michael Ignatieff, director of the Carr Centre for Human Rights Policy at Harvard University says: 'Slavery for example, is called genocide when - whatever it was, and it was an infamy - it was a system to exploit, rather than to exterminate the living'.¹

¹ Source: BBC article 'Analysis - Defining Genocide' at www.news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1701562.stm

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