RAISE AWARENESS AND HELP PREVENT GENOCIDE TODAY

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum teaches that the Holocaust was preventable and that by heeding warning signs and taking early action, individuals and governments can save lives. With this knowledge, the Museum’s Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide works to do for the victims of genocide today what the world failed to do for the Jews of Europe in the 1930s and 1940s. The information below is intended to raise awareness about contemporary genocide and how your community, after seeing the exhibition and learning about the history of the Holocaust, can play a role in helping to prevent genocide today.

WHAT IS GENOCIDE?

The word “genocide” did not exist prior to 1944. It is a very special term coined by a Polish-Jewish lawyer named Raphael Lemkin who sought to describe Nazi policies of systematic murdering during the Holocaust. In 1948, the United Nations approved a written international agreement known as the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. This convention established genocide as an international crime, which signatory nations “undertake to prevent and punish.” Preventing genocide, the other major obligation of the convention, remains a challenge that nations, institutions, and individuals continue to face.

Genocide is an internationally recognized crime where acts are committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. These acts fall into five categories:

1) Killing members of the group
2) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group
3) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part
4) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group
5) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group

There are a number of other serious, violent crimes that do not fall under the specific definition of genocide. They include crimes against humanity, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and mass killing.

GENOCIDE IS PREVENTABLE. THERE ARE ALWAYS WARNING SIGNS.

Genocide is not a spontaneous crime. There are always warning signs before a genocide is committed. Lessons from the Holocaust teach us that by the time mass killing is occurring stopping the violence becomes much more difficult. Paying attention to warning signs and acting early can help prevent violence and save lives. These warning signs can include:

- Hate speech that promotes the idea that members of a certain group are evil and dangerous
- A history of violence in the country/region
- A conflict situation filled with emotion, anxiety, and fear
• Political instability like a coup, revolution, or uprising. In such environments, leaders and citizens may be more willing to consider violence to protect themselves and what they value.
• Autocratic governments where a single person or party has absolute power
• Labeling civilian groups as “the enemy”
• Leaders claiming there is a great danger that justifies violence
• Passing laws that discriminate against people based on their identity
• Belief systems that exclude certain groups
• Armed forces being granted extreme authority
• Stockpiling weapons
• Violence that goes unpunished by the legal system, which may give a green light for more violence in the future

GENOCIDE DID NOT END WITH THE HOLOCAUST.
Since the Holocaust genocide has been committed in Rwanda (1994), Bosnia (1995), Sudan (2003), Iraq (2014), and Burma (2017).

WHAT YOU DO MATTERS.
We can all play a role in helping prevent genocide. Action takes many forms, and every action counts. You can:
• **Stay informed.** Follow the news. Visit our website to learn more about places at risk of genocide and other violence: [https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/countries](https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/countries)
• **Join the Museum community.** Sign up to receive email updates and follow us on Twitter @CPG_Ushmm and Facebook @CenterForThePreventionOfGenocide.
• **Get engaged in your community.** Spread the world about what you’ve learned with friends, family, members of organizations you belong to, and coworkers.
• **Support education and relief efforts.** Find out more about humanitarian organizations, what they’re doing, and how you can help them.
• **Contact the media.** Tell TV, radio, newspaper and online journalists that you want better coverage of places at risk of genocide and other violence. Visit their websites, tag them on social media, call them, and send emails that provide feedback on their coverage.
• **Contact your elected representatives.** Alert them to the need to provide humanitarian assistance, protect civilians, stop the violence, and promote solutions to crises.