

TEN STAGES OF GENOCIDE

This text was edited for use in high schools by [The Genocide Education Project](#) in cooperation with the original author, Dr. Gregory H. Stanton (1998). A full text is also available through Genocide Watch [The Ten Stages of Genocide](#).

1. CLASSIFICATION:

All cultures have categories to distinguish people into "us and them" by ethnicity, race, religion, or nationality: German and Jew, Hutu and Tutsi. If societies are too segregated (divided) they are most likely to have genocide. The main way of preventing genocide at this early stage is to develop opportunities in a society for people to work and live together who are from different ethnic, social, national or religious backgrounds. This will allow people to become more tolerant and understanding of each other. In the United States, public schools serve this function, as they are places where all young people can go regardless of their ethnic, social, national or religious backgrounds. This search for common ground is vital to early prevention of genocide.

Q: Why does the excerpt suggest that highly segregated societies are more likely to experience genocide?

Q: How does bringing people from different backgrounds to work and live together help prevent genocide, according to the excerpt?

2. SYMBOLIZATION:

We give names or other symbols to the classifications of ethnicity, race, religion, or nationality. We name people "Jews" or "Gypsies", or distinguish them by colors or dress, and apply them to members of groups. Classification and symbolization are universally human and do not necessarily result in genocide unless they lead to the stage of dehumanization. When combined with hatred, symbols may be forced upon unwilling members of minority groups: the yellow star for Jews under Nazi rule, the blue scarf for people from the Eastern Zone in Khmer Rouge Cambodia. Sometimes we impose symbols on ourselves like gangs using certain colors. That is the group's right but sometimes backfires when they are discriminated against. To combat symbolization, hate symbols can be legally forbidden (swastikas) as can hate speech. Group marking like gang clothing or tribal scarring can be outlawed, as well. The problem is that legal restrictions will fail if unsupported by society. Sometimes if we outlaw certain names but hate exists new names will just take their place. If widely supported, however, denial of symbolization can be powerful, as it was in Bulgaria, when many non-Jews chose to wear the yellow star, depriving it of its importance as a Nazi symbol for Jews. According to legend in Denmark, the Nazis did not introduce the yellow star because they knew even the King would wear it.

Q: According to the text, can you list some examples of how symbols are used to identify different groups according to the text?

Q: Why might legal restrictions on the practice of symbolization and hate symbols not work or fail?

3. DISCRIMINATION:

A dominant group uses law, custom, and political power to deny the rights of other groups. The powerless group may not be given full civil rights or even citizenship. Examples include the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 in Nazi Germany, which stripped Jews of their German citizenship, and prohibited their employment by the government and by universities. Prevention against discrimination means full political empowerment and citizenship rights for all groups in a society. Discrimination on the basis of nationality, ethnicity, race or religion should be outlawed. Individuals should have the right to sue the state, corporations, and other individuals if their rights are violated.

Q: How did the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 impact Jews of German citizenship in Nazi Germany?

Q: What types of discrimination should be outlawed? Why?

4. DEHUMANIZATION:

Dehumanization is when one group treats another group as second-class citizens. Members of a persecuted group may be compared with animals, parasites, insects or diseases. When a group of people is thought of as “less than human” it is easier for the group in control to murder them. At this stage, hate propaganda in print and on hate radios is used to make the victims seem like villains. In fighting this dehumanization, one must remember that there is no right of “freedom of speech” to tell people to commit murder. Outlawing hate speech can help save the lives of those targeted. If a country is on the verge of committing genocide it is no longer a democracy (if it was before), and the broad freedom of speech protected in a democracy may need to be limited in such a country. Hate radio stations should be shut down, and hate propaganda banned. Hate crimes and atrocities should be promptly punished.

Q: Why does viewing a group as "less than human" make it easier for a group in control to commit acts of violence against them?

Q: What role does the media play in the process of dehumanizing a group?

5. ORGANIZATION:

Genocide is always organized, usually by the state, though sometimes informally or by terrorist groups. Special army units or militias are often trained and armed. Plans are made for genocidal killings. To combat this stage, membership in these militias should be outlawed. Their leaders should not be allowed to travel outside their country where they may be able to raise funds or get weapons. The U.N. should enforce arms embargoes on governments and citizens of countries involved in genocidal massacres, and create commissions to investigate violations, as was done in post genocide Rwanda.

Q: What roles do special army units or militias play in the execution of a genocide?.

Q: What is an “arms embargo?”

6. POLARIZATION:

Extremists drive the groups apart. Hate groups broadcast propaganda that reinforces prejudice and hate. Laws may forbid intermarriage or social interaction between the groups. Extremist terrorism targets moderates, and intimidates them so that they are silent. Moderate leaders are those best able to prevent genocide and they are often the first to be assassinated. Prevention may mean security protection for moderate leaders or assistance to human rights groups. Assets (money and property) of extremists may be seized, and opportunities for international travel denied to them. If extremists try to take over the government, then international sanctions should be put in place.

Q: What types of propaganda do hate groups use to reinforce prejudice and hate?

Q: What actions are suggested to protect moderate leaders?

7. PREPARATION:

National or perpetrator group leaders plan the “Final Solution” to the Jewish, Armenian, Tutsi or other targeted group “question.” They often use euphemisms to cloak their intentions, such as referring to their goals as “ethnic cleansing,” “purification,” or “counter-terrorism.” They build armies, buy weapons and train their troops and militias. They indoctrinate the populace with fear of the victim group. Leaders often claim, “If we don’t kill them, they will kill us.” Prevention of preparation may include arms embargoes and commissions to enforce them. It should include prosecution of incitement and conspiracy to commit genocide, both crimes under Article 3 of the Genocide Convention.

Q: What common justification do leaders use to convince others of the necessity of genocide?

8. PERSECUTION:

Victims are identified and separated out because of their ethnic or religious identity. Death lists are drawn up. In state sponsored genocide, members of victim groups may be forced to wear identifying symbols. Their property is often confiscated. Sometimes they are even segregated into ghettos, deported into concentration camps, or confined to a famine-struck region and starved. Genocidal massacres begin. They are acts of genocide because they intentionally destroy part of a group. At this stage, a Genocide Emergency must be declared. If the political will of the great powers, regional alliances, or the U.N. Security Council can be mobilized, armed international intervention should be prepared, or heavy assistance provided to the victim group to prepare for its self-defense. Humanitarian assistance should be organized by the U.N. and private relief groups for the inevitable tide of refugees to come.

Q: How are victims identified and separated out during the stages of genocide?

Q: What is a Genocide Emergency, and when should it be declared?

9. EXTERMINATION:

Extermination begins, and quickly becomes the mass killing legally called "genocide." It is "extermination" to the killers because they do not believe their victims to be fully human (see dehumanization). When it is sponsored by the government, the armed forces often work with private armies to do the killing. Sometimes the genocide results in revenge killings by groups against each other, creating the downward whirlpool-like cycle of mutual genocide where the victims actually organize and commit a second genocide on the perpetrators. At this stage, only rapid and overwhelming armed intervention can stop genocide. Real safe areas or refugee escape regions should be established with heavily armed international protection. The U.N. needs troops that can go into genocidal areas and stop the killing when the U.N. Security Council calls it. The U.N. may decide to act through regional military forces from organizations like NATO. Relief groups should be prepared to assist the victims. If the U.N. will not get involved directly, militarily powerful nations should provide the airlift, equipment, and financial means necessary for regional states to intervene with U.N. authorization.

Q: What is meant by the term "mutual genocide?"

Q: What are "real safe areas" or "refugee escape regions," and how, according to the excerpt, should they be protected?

10. DENIAL:

Denial is the tenth stage that always follows genocide. It is among the surest indicators of further genocidal massacres. The perpetrators of genocide dig up the mass graves, burn the bodies, try to cover up the evidence and intimidate the witnesses. They deny that they committed any crimes, and often blame what happened on the victims. They block investigations of the crimes, and continue to govern until driven from power by force, when they flee into exile. Leaders of the genocide continue to deny the crime unless they are captured and a tribunal (special court) is established to try them. The best response to denial is punishment by an international tribunal or national courts. There the evidence can be heard, and the perpetrators punished. Tribunals or international courts must be created. They may not prevent the worst genocidal killers, but at least some mass murderers may be brought to justice.

Q: Why is denial considered one of the surest indicators of further genocidal massacres?

Q: What are the common tactics used by perpetrators to obstruct investigations into genocide?

Q: What role do international tribunals play in the aftermath of genocide?

Vocabulary List

1. **Segregated:** Divided or separated, especially in terms of race, ethnicity, or religion.
2. **Prevention:** Measures taken to stop something from happening or developing.
3. **Tolerant:** Showing acceptance and respect towards others' beliefs, practices, or ethnicity.
4. **Hate speech:** Speech that attacks a person or group on the basis of attributes such as race, religion, ethnic origin, etc.
5. **Civil rights:** The rights of citizens to political and social freedom and equality.
6. **Citizenship:** The status of being a legal member of a particular country, with associated rights and responsibilities.
7. **Perpetrator:** A person who carries out a harmful, illegal, or immoral act.
8. **Euphemisms:** Mild or indirect expressions used to replace harsh or unpleasant ones.
9. **Indoctrinate:** To teach or instruct someone in the beliefs or doctrines of a particular group.
10. **Atrocities:** Horrific acts of violence or cruelty.
11. **Militias:** Military forces composed of ordinary citizens, typically used in times of emergency.
12. **Embargoes:** Official bans on trade or other commercial activity with a particular country.
13. **Polarization:** The process of dividing or causing people to divide into two sharply contrasting groups.
14. **Extremists:** Individuals or groups holding extreme political or religious views.
15. **Terrorism:** The unlawful use of violence and intimidation, especially against civilians, in the pursuit of political aims.
16. **Moderates:** People who hold moderate or centrist views, typically avoiding extreme positions.
17. **Sanctions:** Penalties or other means of enforcement used to encourage compliance with rules or laws.
18. **Final Solution:** A euphemism used by the Nazis to refer to their plan to exterminate the Jewish population during World War II.
19. **Ghettos:** Segregated areas where members of a particular ethnic or minority group are forced to live.
20. **Concentration camps:** Places where large numbers of people, especially political prisoners or members of persecuted minorities, are detained and confined under harsh conditions.
21. **Refugee:** A person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster.
22. **Tribunal:** A court or forum of justice.

Summative Self-Assessment: Ten Stages of Genocide

1. Which stage of genocide involves the use of law, custom, and political power to deny the rights of other groups?
 - a. Classification
 - b. Discrimination
 - c. Dehumanization
 - d. Organization
2. In which stage of genocide are victims identified and separated out based on their ethnic or religious identity?
 - a. Polarization
 - b. Preparation
 - c. Persecution
 - d. Extermination
3. What is the main way of preventing genocide at the early stage, according to the provided text?
 - a. Developing opportunities for people from different backgrounds to work and live together
 - b. Legal restrictions on hate symbols and hate speech
 - c. Shutting down hate radio stations
 - d. Creating commissions to investigate violations
4. Which stage of genocide involves the use of euphemisms to cloak intentions, such as "ethnic cleansing" or "purification"?
 - a. Discrimination
 - b. Polarization
 - c. Preparation
 - d. Denial
5. At which stage of genocide is extermination referred to as "genocide" and becomes mass killing?
 - a. Symbolization
 - b. Organization
 - c. Extermination
 - d. Denial
6. What is one way to combat the stage of dehumanization?
 - a. Legalizing hate speech
 - b. Allowing hate symbols
 - c. Shutting down hate radio stations
 - d. Outlawing hate crimes and atrocities
7. Which stage of genocide involves extremists driving groups apart and targeting moderate leaders?
 - a. Polarization
 - b. Preparation
 - c. Discrimination
 - d. Extermination

8. What is the final stage of genocide, characterized by perpetrators denying their crimes and intimidating witnesses?
 - a. Classification
 - b. Discrimination
 - c. Extermination
 - d. Denial

9. What measure can be taken to prevent genocide at the stage of organization?
 - a. Outlawing hate symbols
 - b. Legalizing hate speech
 - c. Creating commissions to investigate violations
 - d. Enforcing arms embargoes on governments involved in genocidal massacres

10. What is the best response to denial according to the text?
 - a. Legalizing hate speech
 - b. Creating commissions to investigate violations
 - c. Punishment by an international tribunal or national courts
 - d. Outlawing hate symbols

KEY:

1. b. Discrimination
2. c. Persecution
3. a. Developing opportunities for people from different backgrounds to work and live together
4. c. Preparation
5. c. Extermination
6. d. Outlawing hate crimes and atrocities
7. a. Polarization
8. d. Denial
9. d. Enforcing arms embargoes on governments involved in genocidal massacres
10. c. Punishment by an international tribunal or national courts

Class Discussion Questions

1. What role do symbols play in the process of discriminating against a group?
2. How can propaganda be used to dehumanize a group?
3. What role does polarization play in driving groups apart and facilitating genocide?
4. What methods might be used in the preparation stage that could lead to a genocide process?
5. What strategies can be employed to prevent the planning and execution of genocidal acts by national or group leaders?
6. Discuss the challenges associated with intervening to stop an extermination stage?.
7. Explain the significance of denial in the aftermath of genocide?
8. Discuss the difficulties associated with holding perpetrators accountable for a genocide.
9. Discuss challenges that might be associated with seeking justice years/decades later.

Notice on use of A.I. - the following prompts were used in support of the creation of the following supplementary materials.

“Please help in preparing a set of discussion questions from the following excerpt” ChatGPT, 13 March. version, OpenAI, 13 March. 2024, chat.openai.com/chat

“Please help in preparing a vocabulary list from the following excerpt” prompt.” ChatGPT, 13 March. version, OpenAI, 13 March. 2024, chat.openai.com/chat

“Please help in preparing a ten question multiple choice quiz on the following excerpt” *prompt*. ChatGPT, 13 March. version, OpenAI, 13 March. 2024, chat.openai.com/chat