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**issue: Preventing ethnic cleansing, genocides, and war crimes**  
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## **Introduction**

Most of the people do really shiver when hearing the word genocide. Mainly because of their reference to the Holocaust. Also known as “die Endlösung” by Nazi-Germany. The systematic extermination of millions of enemies of the Nazi-regime such as Jews and gypsies is the most prominent example of the horrifying act. However, in more recent history, and even today, situations do occur that we might call genocidal. It is our purpose to do whatever lies in our power to avoid genocides in the future by learning from the past.

## **definition of key-terms**

### **genocide**

According to the Oxford-dictionary a genocide is: “the deliberate and systematic extermination of a national, racial, political, or cultural group”

The word is a combination of the Greek word *genos* (people) and the Latin suffix *-cide* (the act of killing). The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (CPPCG) also sees the following acts as symptoms or parts of a genocide;

- Causing major bodily harm
- Inflicting harm to the group’s condition of life
- Imposing measures to deliberately prevent birth within the group
- The forced transferring of people

### **war crime**

A war crime can in essence be every kind of violation of the law of war. As those laws aren’t indisputable, the definition may be a bit vague. In order to get an overall idea of what the most nations consider war crimes, we use the definition as adapted by the Geneva Convention.

### **ethnic cleansing**

Ethnic cleansing is the systematic deliberate removal of ethnic or religious groups from a given territory with the intent of making it ethnically homogeneous. Homogeneous meaning “of one sole sort” A war crime by itself, Ethnic cleansing can be exercised both proactively and silent. Often, measures by, for example a regional government, just make living in the concerned area less favorable and due to that, the targeted minorities will leave. In other cases, deportation is a direct form of ethnic cleansing.

## **current situations**

### **Rohingya people Myanmar**

traditionally, Myanmar, the former Burma, is a nation with a buddhist majority. This feeds negative feelings towards minorities. Most of all, in recent times, the muslim minorities such as the Rohingya face violence without sufficient protection and support of the national and local governments. The last months, this resulted in hundreds of deaths when radicals

burned Rohingya-villages. Victims do include children and elderly. Since Burmese independence, the Rohingya people are one of the most oppressed minorities in the world although their situation is not widely known by the greater public.

Although the Nobel-prize winner and de-facto government-leader Aung San Suu Kyi has reportedly said in the past that violence against minorities is unacceptable, nothing has been undertaken from her side. The government, although not proactively using violence against the Rohingya, is opposing them by denying citizenship. They say the Rohingya to be illegal immigrants from during the colonial rule under the British Empire. The 1982 citizenship-act excludes the Rohingya from the basic rights that apply to all normal citizens of Myanmar. This makes them effectively stateless and vulnerable to any kind of danger as they cannot count on protection by the government's forces. Forced to live in slums, the Muslims are easily found living together and form a target for religious violence. As of now, over 400,000 Rohingya fled Myanmar.

update 19-9-17: a statement has been released by Aung San Suu Kyi condemning all violence. However, she is not referring directly to government-supported violence and sees "no reason for the Rohingya to leave".

### **ethnic cleansing of Syrian Christians**

In the areas of the Islamic State in Syria (ISIS or Daesh) have been carried out massive campaigns of ethnic cleansing by, most of all, ISIS. Around 10 percent of the pre-conflict Syrian population used to be Christian. They were fully protected by the constitution adapted in 1973. This might just be the reason that a lot of the Christian Syrians is more or less supporting president Assad even though they see him as a dictator. Fall of the largely secular regime can harm the position of the Christians as it has in other nations after the Arab Spring. As intelligence in the occupied areas is scarce, we cannot say for certain what the numbers of casualties and displaced persons are. A guess is that the Christian population of, for example, Homs dropped from approximately 160,000 to around 1,000. note: Not only Christians are the casualties of the violence by the Islamic State.

### **conflict in the Central African Republic (CAR)**

"Christian militia in Central African Republic have carried out ethnic cleansing of the Muslim population during the country's ongoing civil war, but there is no proof there was genocidal intent, a United Nations commission of inquiry has determined" according to Reuters. The civil wars in the, often called most violent African state, doesn't seem to come to an end. From 2013 onwards, thousands of civilians have been killed. An unknown number of which is victim of ethnic cleansing and the violence that come with the process.

## **Highest risk for genocides**

Barbara Harff, professor at the U.S. Naval Academy is a major authority on the subject of genocide-risk. In 2011 she released a report with a top 20 of nations with the highest risk for a situation of genocide or ethnic cleansing. Results included in the map shown below.

Rank	Country	Risk Score	Rank	Country	Risk Score
1	Myanmar	16.5	11	Somalia	10.5
2	Syria	15.5	12	Saudi Arabia	10.5
3	China	15.0	13	Sri Lanka	10.0
4	Sudan	14.5	14	Nigeria	9.5
5	Pakistan	13.5	15	Cameroon	9.5
6	Ethiopia	13.5	16	Central African Rep.	9.0
7	Zimbabwe	12.0	17	Uganda	8.5
8	Rwanda	12.0	18	North Korea	8.5
9	Iran	11.5	19	Guatemala	8.0
10	Congo, Dem. Rep.	11.0	20	Uzbekistan	8.0

As we can see. In some cases, violence has erupted since it's prediction in 2011. Examples being CAR, Sudan, and Myanmar. Essential to know when trying to prevent genocides is why some countries are more likely to get to deal with genocides. History can tell us a great deal of possible symptoms.

## **Possible solutions**

As we have seen a lot of examples, both historically and today, we wonder why this kind of horrible situations happen over and over again. Lessons should be learned from the past. But this clearly isn't as simple as it seems. Let's look at some of the possible solutions or additions to measures that already have been undertaken.

### **protect civilians through UN-peacekeepers.**

There are a lot of cases in which the threatened groups could have been protected by the government. If the aggression against the groups isn't state-sponsored, the national government can intervene and accept UN blue helmets. Safeguarding physical safety for the threatened group will ensure that the first stages of genocide won't take place.

### **enforcing international law**

The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), which has its seat in The Hague, Netherlands, was established in 1993 by the UN Security Council. It has indicted 161 persons for serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. Institutions like this can actively undertake judicial action. The International Criminal Court (ICC) can be of major importance.

## **Appendices**

### **useful links**

<http://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/>

site of the UN office that deals with counter-genocide issues. Included on the page are interviews with high ranking officials. Worth watching

<http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/pdf/bgpreventgenocide.pdf>

pdf file with possible counter-genocide measures

[https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1\\_rul\\_rule156](https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule156)

Red Cross report on war crimes. Definition and description