

PREVENTION AND RESISTANCE

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

After World War II, it became apparent that international cooperation was needed to fight crimes of genocide. Indeed, several genocides had already occurred—against the Armenians, the Herero and the Jews—and no international-scale action had been taken to prevent them. Resistance to these genocides was led by the victim groups, who were assisted, or not, by the inhabitants of the countries in which the massacres took place. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), a non-governmental organization (NGO) created in 1863, tried to intervene during the Holocaust without any real success.

It was the institution of the 1948 *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* that created the legal framework for international interventions. It came into force in 1951.



PREVENTION OF GENOCIDE

In addition to, of course, prohibiting genocide, the text of the Convention imposes the obligation to prevent this crime. Rooted in customary international law, this obligation is binding on all States, whether or not they have ratified the Convention.

States that have the ability to employ all reasonable means available to them to prevent the crime of genocide have the duty to do so, including preventing acts committed beyond their borders. States are encouraged to implement mechanisms at the national level to identify and counteract the risk factors that might lead to genocide. The UN also contributes through its Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, who is mandated to promote initiatives at the national and international levels to protect people from genocide and crimes against humanity. The Adviser's recommendations are submitted to the Security Council.

If these peaceful means fail, the only remaining option is to resort to force. Military measures such as sanctions, embargos, preventive deployments and the establishment of no-fly zones may precede armed intervention.

RESISTANCE DURING THE GENOCIDE

If the State is passive, powerless or has collapsed, or is itself the perpetrator of the genocide, help has to come from another source, i.e. civilians, armed international intervention and NGOs.

Civilian resistance can take the following forms:

- A** disobedience by refusing to comply with orders, e.g. the forced conversion to a religion
- B** combat, e.g. sabotage, espionage, uprisings
- C** sounding the alarm, e.g. working to stop the persecution of minorities or urging the international community to react
- D** preservation of traditions, e.g. practising religious rituals, singing songs
- E** rescue by non-victims who can help the victims by providing shelter, food, medical attention or transportation

Prerequisites for resistance

Here are the answers given by a group of teachers at the Holocaust Museum in Washington when asked what was needed by the Jews in the camps and ghettos to fight back:

- // Food
- // Weapons
- // A plan
- // A plan B, if plan A doesn't work out
- // Means of communication
- // Money
- // Training
- // A doctor
- // Organizational strategies
- // Places to hide, a headquarter
- // A goal and a consensus on that goal
- // A leader
- // Loyal, healthy, trained followers
- // Knowledge of the enemy's resources and plans
- // Help (from inside and outside the camps or ghettos)

Factors hindering resistance

- // Persisting hope that things will soon get better
- // Lack of information about the situation
- // Fear of dying
- // Denial of the situation at hand

In short, there was a need for people with nothing left to lose and ready to die, as this was the most plausible outcome of any act of resistance.

Source :

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

<http://>

The UN Security Council may decide on armed international intervention. In this case, it deploys the UN Peacekeepers (Blue Helmets and Blue Berets), composed of military and police personnel from different countries that serve the UN cause by protecting civilians and facilitating humanitarian aid.

International NGOs such as Doctors Without Borders, Amnesty International and Oxfam work all over the world to provide victims with medical, legal and humanitarian aid.

The media play a major role by broadcasting information around the world on the atrocities committed in certain countries, mainly thanks to Human Rights Watch and Reporters Without Borders.

For more information:

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (HCHR), n.d. *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*:

<http://>

Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes: A tool for prevention, United Nations document, 2014

<http://>

Montreal Holocaust Museum. n.d.
“What is Resistance?”

<http://>