Genocide was first recognised as a crime under international law in 1946 by the United Nations General Assembly (A/RES/96-I). It was codified as an independent crime in the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (the Genocide Convention). The Convention has been ratified by 149 States (as of January 2018). The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has repeatedly stated that the Convention embodies principles that are part of general customary international law. This means that whether or not States have ratified the Genocide Convention, they are all bound as a matter of law by the principle that genocide is a crime prohibited under international law. The ICJ has also stated that the prohibition of genocide is a peremptory norm of international law (or ius cogens) and consequently, no derogation from it is allowed.

The definition of the crime of genocide as contained in Article II of the Genocide Convention was the result of a negotiating process and reflects the compromise reached among United Nations Member States in 1948 at the time of drafting the Convention. Genocide is defined in the same terms as in the Genocide Convention in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (Article 6), as well as in the statutes of other international and hybrid jurisdictions. Many States have also criminalized genocide in their domestic law; others have yet to do so.


UN Entities

UN Treaties and Declarations
- Principles of international co-operation in the detection, arrest, extradition and punishment of persons guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity: https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/principles-international-co-operation-detection-arrest
Selected UN Documents


  Meeting held on 10 Feb. 2021 pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 43/29.


- **A/HRC/37/65** (6 June 2018): Joint study on the contribution of transitional justice to the prevention of gross violations and abuses of human rights and serious violations of international humanitarian law, including genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, and their recurrence : report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Guarantees of Non-Recurrence and the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide : note / by the Secretariat: http://undocs.org/A/HRC/37/65

  Transmits “Code of conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes”.


  Transmits the conclusions of the International Conference on Genocide Prevention, which was held in Brussels on 31 March and 1 April 2014 in the presence of the Secretary-General

  Concept note prepared by the delegation of Rwanda: Threat to international peace and security: prevention of and fight against genocide

- **A/63/958** (9 September 2009): Concept note on the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity: note / by the President of the General Assembly: http://undocs.org/A/63/958


Further documents on "genocide" and "genocide prevention":

Selected Statements and Speeches by UN Officials

- **Statements by the Special Advisers:**


- We always have choice between humanity over hatred, Secretary-General stresses in Message for International Day of Reflection on 1994 Rwanda Genocide (SG/SM/21226, 1 April 2022): https://press.un.org/en/2022/sgsm21226.doc.htm


UN Events and Observances


Further information

  o UN News Centre Feature: After two decades, genocide survivor opens up about her anger and forgiveness (1 July 2016): https://news.un.org/en/story/2016/07/533682
• Audiovisual Library of International Law
Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, Alice Wairimu Nderitu, sat down with UN News's Sandra Miller to warn against risk factors for atrocity crimes in a rising number of countries, including Sudan, as the brutal conflict between rival militaries continues there.
• UNRIC Library Backgrounder – Responsibility to Protect: https://unric.org/en/unric-library-backgrounder-r2p

UN Entities

UN Events and Observances

UN General Assembly approves resolution condemning Holocaust denial
A/RES/76/250 Holocaust denial: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly on 20 January 2022
https://undocs.org/A/RES/76/250

Selected Statements and Speeches by UN Officials
• Saddened by death of Benjamin B. Ferencz, Secretary-General stresses best tribute for Nazi War Crimes Prosecutor is continuing to ensure victims’ voices are heard (SG/SM/21758, 10 April 2023): https://press.un.org/en/2023/sqsm21758.doc.htm


Further information

History under attack: Holocaust denial and distortion on social media (UN / UNESCO, 2022): https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223(pf0000382159

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