Genocide

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


- **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


- **S/2014/262** (11 April 2014): Letter dated 10 April 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council: http://undocs.org/S/2014/262 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

- **S/2014/265** (14 April 2014): Letter dated 11 April 2014 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General: http://undocs.org/S/2014/265 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:

• Marking International Day, Secretary-General stresses Convention on Genocide 'Must remain a living force in our world', be translated into tangible action (SG/SM/22056, 29 November 2023):

• Arrest of Fulgence Kayishema in South Africa 'powerful message' that those alleged to have committed genocide cannot evade justice, Secretary-General says (SG/SM/21812, 25 May 2023):

• Commemorating 1994 Genocide in Rwanda, Secretary-General urges standing firm against rising intolerance, 'being ever vigilant and always ready to act' (SG/SM/21761, 14 April 2023):

• Be vigilant, stand firm to combat rising intolerance, Secretary-General urges in Message Marking Anniversary of 1994 Rwanda Genocide against Tutsi (SG/SM/21756, 30 March 2023):

• Do more to 'liberate humanity from scourge of genocide', says Secretary-General in Message for International Day (SG/SM/21618, 6 December 2022):

• 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):

• Escalating violence, rights violations 'alarming warning signs' that should prompt action to prevent future genocide, Secretary-General says on International Day (SG/SM/21066, 7 December 2021):

• Draw on Rwanda's example of justice, reconciliation after 1994 Tutsi Genocide to stop hate-driven movements, Secretary-General stresses in Observance Message (SG/SM/20668, 31 March 2021):

• Heed early warning signs of genocide, Secretary-General stresses on International Day for Victims, urging cooperation in rejecting hate speech, discrimination (SG/SM/20488, 9 December 2020):

• Genocide victims often early targets of hate speech, violence, Secretary-General says in Message for International Day, stressing prevention involves everyone (SG/SM/20482, 8 December 2020):

• 25 Years after Srebrenica Genocide, ‘Peace is still fragile’, Secretary-General warns in Anniversary Message, calling for steadfast commitment to reconciliation (SG/SM/20169, 9 July 2020):

• Welcoming Kabuga arrest for alleged crimes against humanity in Rwandan Genocide, Secretary-General says ending immunity sends powerful message (SG/SM/20082, 16 May 2020):

• Secretary-General, commemorating 1994 Rwanda Genocide, urges world to reject hate speech, forces of polarization (SG/SM/20036, 6 April 2020):

• Secretary-General welcomes International Court of Justice Order on The Gambia v. Myanmar Genocide Convention Case (SG/SM/19946, 23 January 2020):


• Amid alarming surge of xenophobia, racism, Secretary-General calls on states to urgently heed genocide warning signs, in Message for International Day (SG/SM/19900-OBV/1944, 9 December 2019):


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 militias continues there.

UN Entities

UN Events and Observances

UN General Assembly approves resolution condemning Holocaust denial
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/sgsm21758.doc.htm


Further information

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