Genocide is the deliberate and systematic destruction, in whole or in part, of an ethnic, racial, religious or national group. The term was coined in 1944 by Raphael Lemkin. It is defined in Article 2 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (CPPCG) of 1948 as "any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the groups conditions of life, calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; [and] forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."

The preamble to the CPPCG states that "genocide is a crime under international law, contrary to the spirit and aims of the United Nations and condemned by the civilized world" and that "at all periods of history genocide has inflicted great losses on humanity."

Determining what historical events constitute a genocide and which are merely criminal or inhuman behavior is not a clear-cut matter. In nearly every case where accusations of genocide have circulated, partisans of various sides have fiercely disputed the details and interpretation of the event, often to the point of depicting wildly different versions of the facts.
After the Holocaust, which had been perpetrated by the Nazi Germany and its allies prior to and during World War II, Lemkin successfully campaigned for the universal acceptance of international laws defining and forbidding genocides. In 1946, the first session of the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution that “affirmed” that genocide was a crime under international law, but did not provide a legal definition of the crime. In 1948, the UN General Assembly adopted the *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* (CPPCG) which defined the crime of genocide for the first time.\(^2\)

The CPPCG was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1948 and came into effect on 12 January 1951 (Resolution 260 (III)). It contains an internationally recognized definition of genocide which has been incorporated into the national criminal legislation of many countries, and was also adopted by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which established the International Criminal Court (ICC). Article II of the Convention defines genocide as:
any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

(a) Killing members of the group;

(b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;

(c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;

(d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;

(e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Notes


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