

# Research Guide for Contemporary Genocides

## Introduction to Contemporary Genocides

The Holocaust was not the first and is not the last genocide. Since 1900, about 170 million people worldwide have been killed. Many others have been raped, tortured, starved and otherwise oppressed in an attempt to eradicate their religious or ethnic groups. In this research project, your group will look at the many genocides and see that the horror has not stopped.

## Preparing Students Through Literature

On August 24, 1941, two months after Germany's surprise attack on Soviet Russia on June 22, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill delivered a live broadcast from London. Only a year before, the German attack had concentrated on the bombardment of British cities. Churchill described dramatically the barbarity of the German occupation in Russia:

The aggressor ... retaliates by the most frightful cruelties. As his armies advance, whole districts are being exterminated. Scores of thousands — literally scores of thousands — of executions in cold blood are being perpetrated by the German police-troops upon the Russian patriots who defend their native soil. Since the Mongol invasions of Europe in the Sixteenth Century, there has never been methodical, merciless butchery on such a scale, or approaching such a scale. And this is but the beginning. Famine and pestilence have yet to follow in the bloody ruts of Hitler's tanks. We are in the presence of a crime without a name.

*Excerpted from [www.preventgenocide.org](http://www.preventgenocide.org)*

In her book, *A Problem From Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*, Samantha Power examines the vexing challenge of living up to the promise "Never Again":

The sharpest challenge to the world of bystanders is posed by those who have refused to remain silent in the age of genocide. In each case a few Americans stood out by standing up. They did not lose sight of right and wrong, even as they were repeatedly steered to a "context" that others said precluded action.

They refused to accept either that they could not influence U.S. policy or that the United States could not influence the killers. These individuals were not alone in their struggles, but they were not in crowded company either. By seeing what they tried to get done, we see what America could have done. We also see what we might ourselves have attempted. By seeing how and why they failed, we see what we as a nation let happen.

*Excerpted from A Problem From Hell (\$30), Basic Books, 387 Park Ave. S, New York, NY 10016*

## ON THE INTERNET

### Genocide Watch

[www.preventgenocide.org](http://www.preventgenocide.org)

Genocide Watch monitors political and ethnic violence worldwide. The project's education campaign, Prevent Genocide International, offers abundant classroom-friendly material, including commentary on defining, preventing and redressing acts of genocide.

## Responding to Genocide Today

[www.ushmm.org/genocide](http://www.ushmm.org/genocide)

This section of the website for the United States Holocaust Memorial Council seeks to alert the national conscience, influence policy makers and stimulate worldwide action to confront and work to halt acts of genocide and related crimes against humanity.

## Key People, Places or Concepts

### A Timeline of Genocides 1901-2006

- German Southwest Africa 1904-1908: Genocide of Hereros
- Ottoman Turkey 1915-1923: *Ittihad* Genocide of Armenians and Assyrians
- USSR 1932-1934: Soviet Genocide/Famine in Ukraine (*Holodomor*)
- German Occupied Europe 1941-1945: Genocide of Jews (*Shoah/Holocaust*)
- German Occupied Europe 1941-1945: Genocide of Roma-Sinti (*Parajmos*)
- East Pakistan 1971: Genocide in East Bengal
- Burundi 1972: Selective Genocide of Hutus.
- Cambodia 1975-1979: Khmer Rouge “Killing Fields” and Genocide
- Guatemala 1981-83: Genocide in the Maya Highlands
- Iraq 1987-88: *Anfal* Campaign in Kurdistan
- Bosnia-Herzegovia 1992-1995: Serb “*Etnicko Ciscenje*” of Bosnian Muslims
- Rwanda 1994: *Akazu* “Hutu Power” Genocide of Tutsis
- Darfur 2003-present: Genocide of Fur, Zaghawa and Masaalit ethnic groups

### Focus Questions

1. What have you learned about the systematic way that the Nazis began to dehumanize Jewish people?
2. Does that apply to these other genocides? How?
3. What role does language, both spoken and written, play in genocide?
4. What role do religion and race play in genocide?
5. What are likely events that can lead to genocide?
6. What makes these persecutions similar and what makes them different?

### Resources

To promote awareness and action at your school, order the pamphlet *Organizing on Campus to End the Genocide in Sudan*, published by the Committee on Conscience of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Write to: USHMM, 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, SW, Washington, DC 20024. See [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org) for more information.

### Other Resources

Save Darfur Coalition  
[www.savedarfur.org](http://www.savedarfur.org)

American Jewish World Service  
[www.ajws.org](http://www.ajws.org)

Amnesty International  
[www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)

InterAction  
[www.interaction.org](http://www.interaction.org)

Human Rights Watch  
[www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org)

International Crisis Group  
[www.crisisgroup.org](http://www.crisisgroup.org)